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STAN LEE PRESENTS:

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editorial

. . . So I was sitting there with Sven Larsen, Marvel's Marketing Mogul, shooting the breeze and reviewing all the possibilities for MARVEL AGE covers for the next six months. All of a sudden, we came to the horrible realization:

We had too many big events coming up, and far too few covers. No matter how carefully we whittled down the list, we just didn't have the space cover everything that warranted the spotlight. Not inclined to panic, I calmly commented to Sven, "Move over and open the window. I'm going out."

Mr. Larsen of the level head stayed put and offered a solution, simplicity at its most sublime – two covers per issue. This would give me the opportunity to work with *twice as many* of my favorite illustrators, and would give me the chance to bring my readers twice as much superlative original art.

"MARVEL COMICS PRESENTS . . ." I commented, enthusiastic. "Exactly," Sven replied verbosely. So I set about planning MARVEL AGE as a "flip book."

At which time my designers threatened mutiny. All of their carefully-executed designs, which have made MARVEL AGE a cutting-edge magazine, were at stake. Turning it into a flip book would be a nightmare, if we wanted to retain the design integrity. Joe and Mike began using phrases like "drawn" (a common comic book term) and "quartered" (not quite so common in our field). I was concerned.

About this time, I read the DEATH'S HEAD II limited series, having saved the four issues so as to enjoy them all at once. And I noticed a really cool design element used by Marvel UK - two covers, no flip.

So, effective immediately, we're going to use two covers an issue in order to spotlight *two* major features each month, and what better way to begin than with a Joe Quesada/P. Craig Russell *X-Men* montage and a Kirk Jarvinen/Brad Vancata *Avengers* anniversary piece?

It won't stop here. Next month, Ron Frenz and Al Milgrom have given us our first look at the exciting new *Thunderstrike* series, while Tom Lyle and our own *Michael* Kraiger have done a dramatic piece for the Spider-Man/Venom/Carnage crossover. And in March, look for a terrific Ron Lim/Terry Austin *Infinity Crusade* cover, and a Joe Kubert *Heavy Hitters* masterpiece. Yes, that's right – Joe Kubert!

So that's the plan. What do you think? Drop us a line.

(OK Mike, Joe – you can put down those X-acto blades now. . .)

– Steve

This issue is dedicated to Tyndara Meffe. She will be missed. If you drive this winter, please drive carefully – and watch out for those who don't. Please.

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Up Front

ITEM! On November 5th, a quiet little town in rural New York state called Chappaqua became the setting for the creation of nightmarish, flesh-eating monsters bent on the destruction of the human race. It was there at the Edith Macy Conference Center that Group Editor Bobbie Chase brought together the editors, writers and artists of the Midnight Sons line of books for an all day meeting to discuss what will be happening for 1993 in the dark corner of the Marvel Universe.

After 10 hours of exhaustive brainstorming, the creative teams of GHOST RIDER, SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE, MORBIUS, NIGHTSTALKERS and DARKHOLD came up with a number of exciting ideas. The most significant being that, in 1993, there will be two Midnight Sons crossovers.

The first will be short and sweet; a five part story crossing over the June on-sale issues of each title. The story begins when one of the Midnight Sons characters receives a page from the Darkhold that promises to destroy all supernatural beings. What it achieves instead is the creation of a rampaging demon who even the combined Midnight Sons are powerless to stop.

The second crossover will be much more monumental. In the original "Rise of the Midnight Sons" storyline it was made clear that the "walls" which separate our world from other dimensions were weakening. This weakening hasn't stopped. In fact, after the events of the June crossover, the walls start crumbling. The result is an invasion of demons into our world. Slated for October, this major, multi-part crossover event is tentatively titled, "All Hell Breaks Loose!"

In addition to the crossovers fans can look forward to these changes in the coming year.

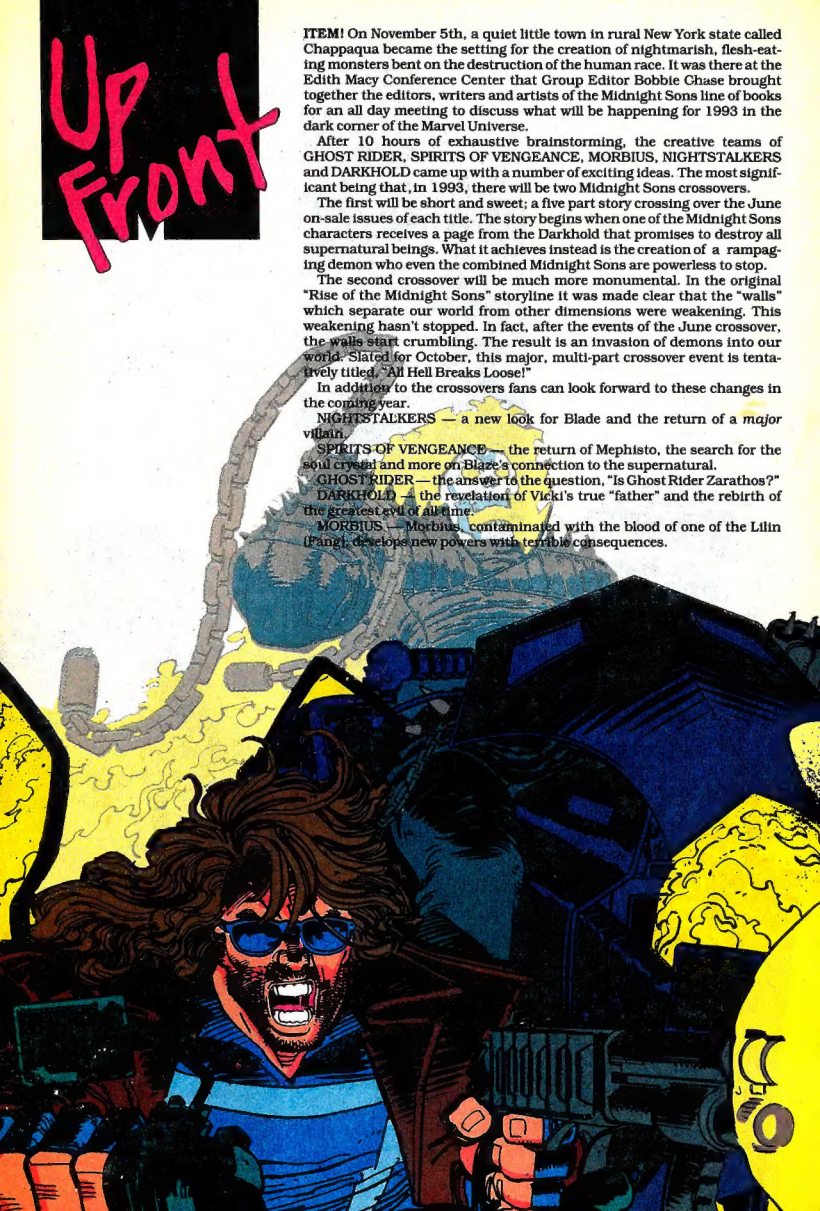
NIGHTSTALKERS — a new look for Blade and the return of a *major* villain.

SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE — the return of Mephisto, the search for the soul crystal and more on Blaze's connection to the supernatural.

GHOST RIDER — the answer to the question, "Is Ghost Rider Zarathos?"

DARKHOLD — the revelation of Vicki's true "father" and the rebirth of the greatest evil of all time.

MORBIUS — Morbius, contaminated with the blood of one of the Lilin (Fang), develops new powers with terrible consequences.



ITEM! Evil-doers everywhere beware — Fight Man is coming! The greatest crime fighter of all time arrives next month in his very own 48-page one shot special (Why a *one*-shot? Because one shot is all he needs!).

Created by BILL & TED'S EXCELLENT COMIC BOOK writer/artist Evan Dorkin, Fight Man debuted in the pages of that dearly departed comic where fan response was so strong that Evan felt he had to resurrect the punchy pugilist for one more battle.

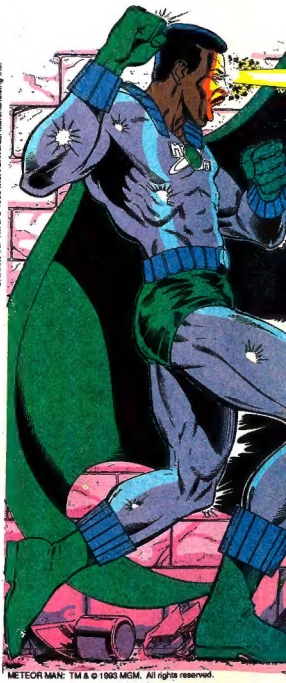
Fight Man's philosophy is that he can solve all of society's problems with his fists. So, he fights. Who does he fight? His arch-enemies, of course; Atomic Lou, Polka Doctor, Plug-In Maniac, the Hooded Eye and his ex-wife's lawyer. With the aid of his 14th youthful sidekick (the previous 13 died in battle), Kid Caustic, (his other sidekicks included Kid Vicious, Kid Not-So-Vicious and Kid More-Vicious-Than-Kid-Not-So-Vicious-But-Less-Vicious-Than Kid Vicious) Fight Man wages a war for truth, justice and laughter.

DARKMAN: TM & © 1993 MCA/Universal Merchandising Inc.

ITEM! The Darkman is back. Cloaked in darkness and shrouded in mystery, the tragic, chameleon-faced hero of the popular 1990 action film by writer/director Sam Raimi returns to Marvel in a new DARKMAN six issue limited series written by Kurt Busiek (WEB OF SPIDER-MAN), penciled by Javier Saltares (GHOST RIDER) and inked by Andrew Pepoy. Printed on heavyweight, high-gloss paper, the 48 page premiere will feature a special painted cover by Saltares. This moody, shadow-filled series will deal with the demented Darkman's obsessive desire for revenge, his grief over the loss of his beloved wife and a deadly confrontation with the Witch Finder — a villain possessed by the spirit of a 17th century Salem witch hunter.

ITEM! It's the time of year for *manly* super heroes. In addition to FIGHT MAN and DARKMAN, METEOR MAN is also hitting the scene in the official comic adaptation of the new Robert Townsend film. Written by Dwight Coye, penciled and inked by Robert Walker and John Holdredge, the 64-page adaptation is an urban fairy tale about a mild mannered school teacher named Jefferson Reed who, upon being hit by a falling meteor, is mysteriously endowed with incredible abilities. The super powered scholar must now learn how to overcome his fear of change and confrontation and control his newfound might and use it for the benefit of society.

The adaptation is followed in March by an all new six part METEOR MAN limited series that picks up where the movie leaves off. In keeping with the spirit of the film, the limited series offers a combination of action, drama and comedy that pits the neo-hero against the super villains Ghost Strike and Malefactor and introduces him to such Marvel favorites as Spider-Man and the Punisher.



METEOR MAN: TM & © 1993 MGM. All rights reserved.

ITEM! Marvel UK seems determined to top last year's achievements by introducing *three* new ongoing monthly series in February alone.

In SUPER SOLDIERS, the title characters originate from a bizarre experiment conducted on dead and dismembered bodies. During the 1982 Falklands War, a secret branch of the military collected body parts of the dead and dying to create an army of scientifically enhanced soldiers. The project was scrapped when one of the soldiers went berserk and used his superhuman strength to kill all the others but one. The two survivors were placed in cryogenic suspension for further study and today, 10 years later, the two have been accidentally released. Written by Michael Bennent and Lee Stevens and penciled by Andrew Currie (IRON MAN) this new book focuses on these two surviving Frankenstein warriors as one seeks his true identity and revenge against the other survivor, a murderous berserker, and his creators.

WILD THING takes place in a violent and corrupt world of the future in which virtual reality threatens to destroy society. Virtual reality (VR) is a term for computer programs which generate images so perfect that they seem real. In this futuristic world, VR has become a drug, with electronic fantasy addicts buying illegal VR programs from high-tech dope pushers, even though the long term effects on addicts are insanity and *death*. Arcade, a special government task force, hunts down the death dealing VR pushers, and Arcade's top agent is detective Nikki Doyle (codename: Wild Thing), an ex-addict who has the power to enter the minds of VR users and interact with their digitized dreams. Written by Simon Jowett (WARHEADS) and penciled by Duke (DARK ANGEL) Mighten, WILD THING takes readers to the most alien world of all — the darkest recesses of the human mind.

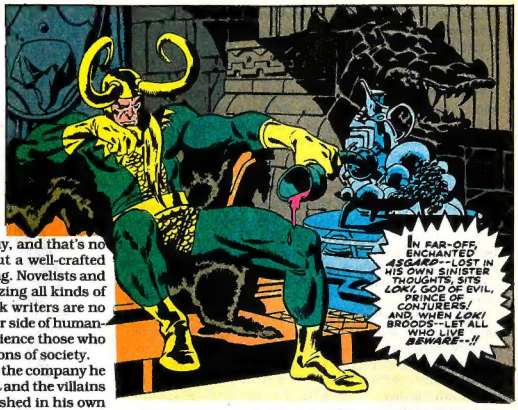
BLACK AXE is the ultimate gun for hire. Not just an ordinary mercenary, Black Axe is a 10,000 year old warrior who has spent the better part of those years perfecting the art of killing, and who better to pitch him against in his first issue than — Death's Head! Written by Simon Jowett (WILD THING) and penciled by Edmund Perryman (MOTORMOUTH), BLACK AXE combines ancient battle techniques, high-tech weaponry and an indestructible axe, to form one very unique new book. The first three issues feature covers by John Romita, Jr. (PUNISHER WAR ZONE, CABLE).

And SHADOW RIDERS, a four issue limited series originally scheduled to ship in January has been moved back to debut in April, guest-starring GHOST RIDER and CABLE.

ITEM! Even before the Avengers or the X-Men, there was a team of super powered heroes who fought for freedom and justice during the dark days of World War II—the Invaders. The heroes of the Golden Age are back with an all new, war era adventure in the INVADERS Limited Series. Written by Roy Thomas (CONAN, AVENGERS WEST COAST) and penciled by Dave Hoover (NIGHT THRASHER: FOUR CONTROL), this four issue series unites Captain America, Namor — the Sub-Mariner, and the original Human Torch to take on the evil Battle-Axis: a deadly team of former American super heroes turned Nazi super villains. Written in action style and utilizing many classic heavy-hitting characters, the INVADERS limited series is a true *blast* from the past.

- Matt Morra

Tom Talks


IN FAR-OFF ENCHANTED ASGARD--LOST IN HIS OWN SINISTER THOUGHTS, SITS LOKI, GOD OF EVIL, PRINCE OF CONJURERS! AND, WHEN LOKI BROODS--LET ALL WHO LIVE BEWARE--!!

Everybody loves a *really* good bad guy, and that's no contradiction! There's something about a well-crafted villain that just sets the heart a'pumping. Novelists and filmmakers alike are forever romanticizing all kinds of rogues and scoundrels, and comic book writers are no different. We're all intrigued by the darker side of humanity, and fiction allows us to safely experience those who fiendishly flaunt the laws and conventions of society.

It's often said that a man is known by the company he keeps. The same is true of a super hero, and the villains he fights. Once a hero has been established in his own comic book, his life could get predictably dull if it weren't for the fact that a new evildoer was bound to pop up every month. Let's face it, the first thing every comic book reader does, when a new book hits the stands, is to check out the cover to see who the bad guy is, and to learn the new and provocative manner in which he's going to menace the star of the title.

Trust me, a good villain doesn't come easy. Check out the entire rogues gallery of any current comic book title, and you'll see what I mean. You'll usually find a few great villains, a larger number of mediocre ones, and quite a few lame-os! In order to become a first string scalawag, an antagonist must be exciting, intriguing, and distinctive. No one cares about a boring villain. We aren't interested in reading about cliched, commonplace characters with dreary lives, dull personalities, and lackluster powers. People turn to comic books because they want to experience the bizarre, the colorful and the unusual.

If you're going to attempt to create a villain, make certain that there's something new and unique about him. A power, motivation, methodology, history or personal goal we've never before experienced.

Doctor Doom is the absolute monarch of a small country who believes that he, alone, can lead this entire world to unprecedented posterity. Using his unparalleled scientific genius, he is willing to transform this planet into an earthly paradise in exchange for only one thing. . .total blind obedience!

Magneto wants to make the world safe for mutant-kind. Using his mastery of magnetism, he attempts to accomplish his goal through the total subjugation of humankind.

Ultron wishes to end the chaos of existence, and bring total order into the universe. He can only accomplish this noble goal by obliterating all who live.

Loki, the Norse god of evil, is a master of sinister sorcery and an unequaled schemer. Jealous of the mighty Thor since the dawn of time, he is continually plotting his noble step-brother's humiliation and ruin.

Each of the above miscreants have provocative motivations. They are all visually colorful and exciting. Each one possesses an intriguing personal history, and they all seek to accomplish their interesting goals by very distinctive methods.

NOW I'LL MERELY ALTER MY MAGNETIC WAVES FROM POSITIVE TO NEGATIVE, SO THAT THEY WILL REPEL ANYTHING THAT COMES WITHIN RANGE! NOTHING CAN TOUCH ME AS I WALK TO MY OBJECTIVE!
WE CAN'T STOP HIM! CALL FOR RE-INFORCEMENTS!
I'M 'WAY AHEAD OF YA, PAL!

BUT, THE ADDITIONAL REINFORCEMENTS ARE EQUALLY POWERLESS TO STOP THE ONE-MAN INVASION OF THE STRATEGIC BASE!
IT..IT'S LIKE HE'S GOT AN INVISIBLE BARRIER 'ROUND HIM, HURLING US AWAY!

A villain should also be worthy of the hero he's attempting to conquer. He should have sufficient personal power at his command, or a plan that is so clever, so diabolically deadly that it presents a real challenge to our illustrious hero. Since the bad guys are the ones who usually instigate the conflict, the scales of battle should be decidedly tipped in their favor. While Doctor Octopus can really tax Spider-Man and has a great advantage over Daredevil, he wouldn't last a single round against Warlock. . .not unless he had something really clever working in his favor. No one roots for a bully, and that's exactly what the Silver Surfer would seem like if he went after the Ringmaster and his Circus of Crime. Silver Sable and the Punisher can hunt local crime czars. The X-Men and the Fantastic Four usually aim for bigger game.

NOW, WATCH ME TRAP A SPIDER IN A WEB OF MY OWN-- A WEB MADE OF MY NEW-FOUND ARMS! YOUR STRENGTH IS MERELY THAT OF A SPIDER, BUT MINE IS THE ENERGY OF AN ATOM, BORN OF A NUCLEAR ACCIDENT!
I'M HELPLESS! CAN'T FIGHT ALL THOSE ARMS AT ONCE! DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO NEXT! HE'S JUST TOYING WITH ME!

And, no top drawer troublemaker ever makes an appearance without a new plan, a novel agenda, an original weapon, an exotic locale, a surprising power, or a truly creative threat. The first time Doctor Doom confronted the Fantastic Four, he sent them back into time to obtain the legendary treasure of Blackbeard the pirate. The second time, he joined with the Sub-Mariner and hijacked the Baxter Building into space. The third time, transferred his mind into the body of Reed Richards, and attempted to banish the rest of the FF to a microscopic universe.

Well, I assume you're getting the general idea. The most reputable of our magnificent mischief-makers wouldn't be caught dead in a story that doesn't offer a twist which is devilishly different from all others. Otherwise, it just would be worth their bother!

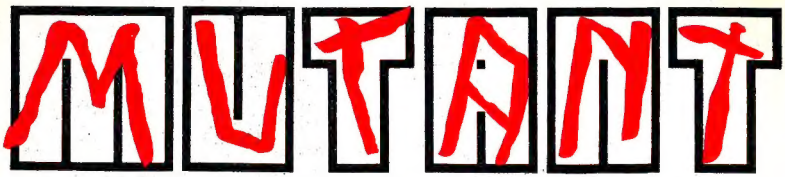
Think about it and. . .

Thanks for being there!

- Tom DeFalco

BOSSMEN *by Rick Parker*

HALLO... TOM DEFALCO HERE?
DO YOU HAVE PRINCE ALBERT IN A CAN?
UHH... WELL I GUESS SO... YEAH!!!
WELL THEN, LET 'IM OUT!!
LISSEN, KID! DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEA WHO YOU'RE TALKIN' TO--?! I'M TOM DEFALCO-- THE BIG CHEESE-- THE HEAD HONCHO-- THE BOSSMAN OF BOSSMEN!! I RULE DIS JOINT WITH AN IRON FIST! WHEN I FIND OUT WHO YOU ARE, YOUR SUBSCRIPTION TO THOR IS HISTORY, PAL! AND--
CLIK!!!
BACK IN CALIFORNIA...
OKAY...LET'S SEE NOW... GROTH... GOODWIN... GRUENWALD... GIORDANO... AHH, YES-- GIORDANO!!
HULLO!!! DICK GIORDANO SPEAKING!!!
HEY, DICK--! IS YOUR REFRIGERATOR RUNNING...?
Stan Lee



Now celebrating their 30th anniversary at Marvel, the X-MEN sport a whole line of assorted spin-off titles. Each has its own lineup, its own flavor, its own writer. MARVEL AGE recently sat down with the three major mutant scribes—Peter "X-FACTOR" David, Scott "UNCANNY X-MEN" Lobdell, and Fabian "X-FORCE & X-MEN" Nicieza—to talk with them about the past and future of the X-Men Universe. Keep in mind that, in addition to being X-writers, Scott is a stand-up comedian, Fabian edits REN & STIMPY, and Peter, well, he's just nuts. Getting these guys to stay serious during a round-robin interview took all of our wits (and some serious editing).

MA: Let's talk about the future of the mutant titles. Where are each of your X-Books going? Fabian?

FN: The entire year of 1993 and much of 1994 is being defined by something that evolves out of the X-Cutioner's Song—but I still don't know how much we can reveal at the point this interview is going to come out. But we'll say that something is being introduced into the Marvel Universe which is going to cause us all to reinspect the aspects of the mutant books that made them so popular to begin with—the isolation, the prejudice, the themes of people trying to struggle to accomplish something in the world for the betterment of everyone while others are trying to put them down. And the **X-Men** are going to continue to explore that as the edges of Xavier's dream are getting frayed away. The individuals in **X-MEN** are going to be enduring a lot to determine why they're continuing this fight, when they're obviously losing.

The random element—the "x-factor," as it were—that gets introduced into the books is going to cause them to seriously question what's going on, and it also threatens each and every one of their lives. We're going to get some interesting character interaction between the different group members, development of the relationship between Rogue and Gambit. We're also going to introduce a wild card into the team, a new member who will be introduced in the fall, who is a long-established Marvel mutant character. And when he comes into the mix, it's going to be interesting because he's being forced down their throats in a way by Xavier, who wants to help this man who's asking for help. The X-Men aren't too happy about it, because he is a real ♂@#[head.

That's the direction that **X-MEN** is going in…I'm sure there'll be lots of hittin' and slappin', too, for those kids out there. *(Laughter)* The heck with all this thematic crap, let's talk about who slaps who.

In **X-FORCE**, we're going to try something exciting and new: we're going to try to make them three-dimensional characters. What we have planned for that is a real heavy look at the interaction between the team members, without Cable for the time being. Cable will come back into the book on a semi-regular basis later on in the year, but we're going to really be concentrating on the teen-age characters themselves, and how they deal with being on their own and how they deal with their newly-developing agenda for how to handle things. I mean, we're talking about young people who have been trained by Xavier, Magneto and Cable. So they have very interesting influences behind their methodology and how they view the world.

We're going to continue to go into the themes that Rob [Liefeld] and I had talked about originally, which is children at war, and how they operate when they're fighting a war—because that's what they perceive they're doing. So they're going to have literally and figuratively a bunker mentality, because their base of operations is going to be a bunker—

PD: Stifle, Edith.

FN: *(Laughter)* They're literally carving a bunker out of the remains of Warpath's Indian reservation. It's a much more heavily action-oriented book that's driven by various forces, although seemingly happening at the same time and place and rarely ever explained. *(Laughter)* And they will continue to do so. Six-Pack will be re-forming, Deadpool will be coming back, the Externals will be involved in the book…that covers us through the summer of this year. The Mutant Liberation Front will be forming under a new head, as a smaller, tighter unit; their agenda is much stronger and much more focused than it had been before,and we'll have a new mysterious leader for the MLF, who will not be Stryfe…or maybe *will* be Stryfe. We'll see.

MA: Peter, what about X-FACTOR?

PD: I think one of the difficulties is that, in **X-FACTOR**, I've been trying to make the book so different, that to a certain extent a number of fans have reacted to it in a negative way, essentially saying, "Gee, it's too different, I'm not sure if I like it or not."

Because I have such instituted such bizarre things as humor into the book—

FN: *(Gasps loudly)*

PD: —it's regarded purely as a "funny book," which is not what I intended in the first place. So I'm going to be endeavoring over the next year to strike something of a balance; to encourage the readers to take the characters and the situations that they're in more seriously, while at the same time try to make sure to maintain the tone and style that have made the book, to my mind, unique among the various mutant titles.

I'm going to be doing more exploration of the characters, making the readers realize that they have depth, they have their own criteria, they have their own agendas. Part of the problem is that I have not had the characters launch into lengthy soul-searching, soul-searing monologues about their various difficulties.

SL: Not that there's anything wrong with that.

FN: *(Laughter)* No, not that that's not been the *staple* of the books for God knows how long—

PD: Exactly! And thus, because I haven't been doing that, I think people are under the impression that the characters have no depth. So I am going to try and be a little bit less subtle in that respect by having the characters spell things out—at least once—so that the readers will know how the characters stand. From then on, I want to try and do more to play with them across aspects of the mu-

MOUTHPIECES

A quick peek inside the brains of the X-Men writers

tant universe with which the readers are more familiar.

For example, Genosha. They are going to be heading back to Genosha in tandem with this new group of characters, the X-Patriots, in a major storyline. It will answer some long-standing questions such as, what's the deal with Rahne and why is she acting the way she is? The Genosha storyline will also introduce a major new villain called Armageddon, who is going to be pulling together a lot of story threads, and helping give the entire book more of an underpinning and a feeling of its own back story.

I will also be introducing a new character who will be joining and should be shaking up the mix a good deal—very mysterious extradimensional-type character. The problem when you're introducing new characters is that I don't want to bring in someone from the future, because that's been done in the other X-Books—

SL: When was that?

FN: What future?

PD: *(Laughter)* I don't want to bring somebody in from space, so therefore I thought we'd try something *totally* different by having him come in from another dimension...what the heck.

FN: Longshot, Shatterstar...

SL: The Great Kazoo.

PD: What, from the Flintstones?

FN: After all this time in comics, if you're doing it, chances are it's been done before. That's the problem. It's a matter of how you do it that counts.

PD: Exactly. Because there will be things about [this new character] that I think will cause a good deal of debate among the readers. I want to try to add some mystery to the book, but a mystery that can be solved, instead of people just speculating wild theories—

FN: It's solvable now, isn't it, Scott?! *(To microphone)* Scott pointed at me, and he was referring to the Cable stuff, but it's solvable now, isn't it, folks?

PD: Not soluble, which a lot of people say means "dissolvable in water"...

FN: *(Laughter)* Sure, we don't want that. Don't put your comic in water, kids—

PD: That's true. **X-FACTOR** is soluble.

SL: Well, there are plastic bags so you can—

PD: But I am trying to strike the balance of introducing this mysterious new character—about whom people can actually take some educated guesses—while making the book as fun as possible.

FN: The readers love that, too; they love trying to guess things before we tell them. They love knowing things before the characters know them. One thing that Peter had, which was unfortunate for him and made it harder for him in a way, was that he was given a book with a lot of characters who had never been together before—

PD: And nobody cared about!

FN: —and he had to develop them. He's been starting from scratch, but it's not like an origin issue of a new character, because he still had to worry about all the back story, and all of these characters had a tremendous amount of back story. So it's been harder for him than it's been for Scott or myself. But it's just a matter of the readers just continuing to go on with it. And they are, I mean the book's doing really well.

PD: The other thing that I think is going to be tremendous is that (penciler) Joe Quesada is coming on the book. I think that the artists we've had up till now are brilliant stylists

—Larry Stroman, Jae Lee—absolutely brilliant artists, but their style isn't necessarily for everybody. I loved Larry's stuff, I loved Jae's stuff. But on the other hand, some people reacted the same way they react to Bill Sienkiewicz. They're people who do incredible stuff, but their style isn't necessarily for everyone. I think that Joe's style is going to be more accessible to more people.

FN: But it's still very stylized.

PD: Exactly, but the thing is, he's got such a knack for storytelling, and he brings so much of his own enthusiasm to the book. He keeps calling me up and saying, "What if we do it this way, what if we do it that way?" Which is also a pleasure, because I've had artists who come up with neat ideas, and then they just do them without telling me.

FN: Or they're afraid to talk to you about it, so they don't do them. And it might have been a really good idea, but they didn't communicate with you.

PD: I so encourage artists to call me, anytime day or night—

SL: Artists who you're working with.

FN: Preferably. *(Laughter)*

PD: The other aspect I want to explore with X-Factor is that they are a government group—and since we've just undergone a change in the administration, I figure that it might be fun to play off of that. As a result, I am writing to Bill Clinton, and asking what his official position on mutants...

FN: *(Laughter)*

PD: ...So that I can be sure to have a joke right in the book. He's so easy to write to; he's still in Arkansas, so it should be easy enough.

FN: *(Laughter)* Sure. This, of course, isn't going to get Peter on any FBI flyers or anything; they're not going to red-flag him in a computer, are they? *(Laughter)*

PD: I figure that the absolute worst thing that happens is that I never hear from them. But on the other hand—

FN: No, the absolute worst thing that can happen is that someone's across the street from you, taking photographs on a daily basis, that's the worst thing that can happen. *(Laughter)*

PD: Hey, as long as they get my good side. And I won't tell you which side that is...

One of the drawbacks of **X-FACTOR** is that we are so hysterically late on deadline, that issue #86 is on the stands right now, while issue #87 isn't finished being penciled yet. So I am able to have that kind of timeliness to it. Issue #88 will talk about Clinton's inauguration, and that'll be coming out in January, so that we are able to stay as *au courant* as possible.

The drawback is that it's giving the editors prematurely gray hair. The advantage is that if something happens in the news, I can either construct a story around it, or at least have the characters react to it. And since they're in that government setting, I figure why not take advantage of it?

SL: Are we going to find out that Hillary and Val are good friends?

PD: Joe has been pleading with me to write in some actual people, such as Al Gore or something, because he says he does really good renderings of likenesses. So I'm tempted to have Al Gore be put in charge of it. Just as Bush put Quayle in charge of the space program—

SL: Gore would be the Mutant Czar.

PD: More or less. We'd just have Gore show up and give them his blessing, or say "We're going to be keeping a tighter rein on you, and we may have to cut your budget." It would be interesting if X-Factor's budget got cut in half.

FN: Yeah, that would be good, actually. They have to take coach flights; no more fancy "Corvette-jets." *(Laughter)*

PD: Well, they do take planes sometimes, but it would be interesting if, instead of taking these large private planes, they had to charter these little puddle-jumpers.

FN: Yeah, and they get stuck next to crying babies on flights—

PD: Oh, God! *(Laughter)* Naah, that's too silly.

FN: Yeah, we're not writing humor books anymore.

SL: That was the *old* new **X-FACTOR**, this is the *new* new **X-FACTOR**.

PD: But still as entertaining.

MA: And what about UNCANNY X-MEN, Scott?

SL: There's a fundamental difference

between **UNCANNY X-MEN** and **X-MEN** in that this year, everything that's going on in the mutant universe is going to polarize **UNCANNY X-MEN** and get them much more focused. Rather than stepping away and deciding that Professor Xavier's dream doesn't work, the Uncanny X-Men are going to realize that they are the caretakers of this dream, which is very viable. With the entire world falling apart around them, now more so than ever they need to be the upstanding mutants, the ones who have the code. You have **X-FORCE**, which is kind of renegade-oriented, and **X-FACTOR**, which is very government-oriented, and the UNCANNY X-MEN is going to be about focusing on the viable aspects of why the X-Men are still all together, rather than decided that they shouldn't be together.

MA: How is that going to progress in the near future?

SL: With the return of a major, major, major super-villain. There's an old saying that a hero is only as interesting as the villains he fights. With the return of this adversary, we're going to be redefining the characters and seeing how they respond. This will help the characters get back into focus, as well as their rationale for existing as a group. The book will continue to be character-driven.

MA: How closely do each of you pattern your current writing to past X-Men writing?

PD: My book is nothing like the previous **X-FACTOR**, because it's a totally different group, with a totally different setup. So all I'm trying to do is be consistent with myself and tell good stories.

SL: The characters I'm working on have been around the Marvel Universe for a long time. There's a lot there in those characters, and sometimes I think we could spend the next ten years just tying up holes and plot threads, and not have to create anything new—and we'd still have interesting stories to tell. But that's not going to happen.

I'm concentrating on pulling away from the great tapestry of X-Men history and trying to work with a smaller palette, and tell stories about the characters. What I'm trying to do, with respect to the history of the book is, with each issue, tell a complete story so that if a new reader comes on, they can still follow it, read the story and enjoy the story, without necessarily having to know about the 30 years prior to that.

FN: I look at the books as a real evolution from the very beginning. I think that Stan [Lee] and Jack [Kirby] set up all the themes that this book was about from the very first issue. And it carried through the book forever. Roy Thomas, when he handled it, he did the exact same thing; he further developed these themes of prejudice and isolation, accommodation, fighting vs. unity, and how to best achieve peace. It was always an allegory for prejudice and race relations in our times.

I think Chris [Claremont]—obviously because of the bulk of the run he had on the book, the duration of it—was able to really explore it in more mature ways than the books in the '60's or '70's did. But that's mostly just because every new generation of writers is able to explore these things a little more in-depth than the previous ones. I expect that whoever's writing the X-Men 15 or 20 years from now—because I guarantee it won't be me—they'll be carrying it on even more in depth than we are now. I believe that anybody writing anything with an "X" on it is completely indebted in many ways that those four gentlemen did...and Len Wein and Dave Cockrum are no slouches, either, considering that they re-created the team and re-conceived all the characters.

PD: Something that I really don't think they get enough credit for.

FN: Oh, they certainly don't get enough credit for it, but—

PD: I mean, Len Wein created Wolverine.

FN: —but you also look at it from the point of view of "Who did the most work on a character or on a book?" And Len and Dave didn't do that much work on these characters, when you come right down to it.

PD: Well, Dave did.

FN: Not even, when you consider he only drew about eight to ten issues, tops.

SL: That's true, but I think that the X-Men were fascinating enough in the first ten issues before John Byrne even got on the book.

FN: Oh, absolutely, there's no doubt. They were very fresh, they were very new [characters] when they started out—

PD: They took a book that, when it started out, was bi-monthly, and those two months between issues of **UNCANNY X-MEN** were the longest two months I, as a fan, had to live through.

FN: You're right, back then there was a real excitement about buying the books. I think we're trying to get that back right now. I think it might have been lost a little bit in the past few years.

SL: Because—?

FN: Because things weren't being resolved; some storylines and subplots were dragging on a little longer than they should have. This is a monthly medium; you don't have the luxury of stretching things out over three, four years. You don't have the luxury of developing a subplot and not picking it up again for six issues. You just can't do that. I think that comes as a result of not seeing the forest for the trees, of knowing how much you want to do—and wanting to do so *much* that you don't end up doing any of it, you don't end up focusing on any of the little things because there are so many little things you want to do.

MA: Because in the end, you only have 22 pages a month—

FN: Which isn't really all that much, when you come right down to it. All of us, I'm sure, would love to occasionally have 30 or so—I mean, the last chapter of the X-Cutioner's Song went to 25 pages...we could have easily gone to 30 or 35.

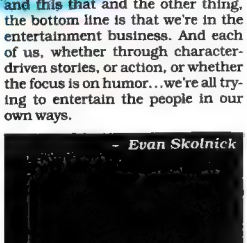
SL: And it still wouldn't have made any sense.

FN: *(Laughter)* Let him complain, let him whine...he's only Scott.

PD: And what the hell kind of name is Lobdell?

FN: All three of us, I believe, since we've been talking [with each other] so much more, and meeting so much more, we're more focused on how to accomplish the things we want to accomplish in these books, not the least of which, mind you, is entertaining the hell out of the readers on a monthly basis.

PD: Beyond telling stories about mutant angst, beyond telling stories about racial harmony, the dream, and this that and the other thing, the bottom line is that we're in the entertainment business. And each of us, whether through character-driven stories, or action, or whether the focus is on humor...we're all trying to entertain the people in our own ways.


- Evan Skolnick

Stan's SOAP BOX

THE AVENGERS 1 SEPT.

Hi, heroes!

Let's go back to September '63. (Of course, I realize that some of you can't literally go back, because you weren't even born at that time, but humor me anyway.)

The ninth month of the sixty-third year of the twentieth century is a date I'll never forget, because that was the time I suggested to the gang in the bullpen that we gather some of our most colorful heroes (and one heroine) together and feature them as an ongoing super team.

The rationale was obvious. Judging by the mountain of mail we received each month, we knew that our rollickin' readers loved it when one or more super heroes would appear in another hero's mag. Nothing seemed to make the howlin' hordes of Marveldom happier than reading a story which had more than one costumed cavorter recklessly romping through the pages.

Of course, in '63 we already had FANTASTIC FOUR, which had been setting all sorts of sales records for the past couple of years, and we were also planning to launch the rather daring and unusual concept of the X-MEN in September, but those two books were still somewhat different. They consisted of heroes who belonged to their own team and to their own team only! They didn't join up with any other do-gooders on a regular basis.

On the other hand, it seemed like it would be an interesting idea to take characters who were *already* established in their own monthly magazines and let them join forces, to fight as a team, in a separate magazine which would also be published monthly.

But there's still another reason we created THE AVENGERS, one which I've never revealed in print before! As you know, one feature on which Marvel has always prided itself is our attention to characterization. We've always tried to have heroes who are more than one-dimensional characters, heroes who are flesh and blood, with real personalities, fears and problems just like anyone else. So, just think of it. What better way to emphasize our heroes' true nature, to give you a handle on how they really think and behave, than to have them interact with each other? Think of all the conflicts and rivalries, the jealousies and emotional traumas we're able to reveal by putting a group of powerful, strong-willed, independent heroes together, heroes who had always been used to acting on their own, who had never before been asked to do things 'for the good of the team!' I instinctively sensed that this new group of Earth's mightiest super heroes, which we called THE AVENGERS, would typify everything that the so-called "Marvel style" represented!

Selecting the members was the most. We couldn't wait to see what would happen, storywise, when we put totally unique and unrelated characters like Thor, The Hulk, Iron Man, Ant Man and The Wasp together!

Another great things about The Avengers was (and still is) the fact that the team is open-ended. We can add new members at any time and we can send others packing whenever we feel the team is getting too crowded. One of our most memorable issues was #4, in which we brought back Captain America after he had been lamentably missing from comic books for more than a decade. Cap, a born leader, soon took over the chairmanship of the team, and the rest was history!

Today, as you know, we have our regular AVENGERS mag as well as AVENGERS WEST COAST. If their popularity continues to soar, don't be surprised to see, sometime in the future, AVENGERS DEEP SOUTH, or AVENGERS FAR NORTH, or AVENGERS THIRD AVENUE BETWEEN OAK STREET AND ELM! Hey, nothing's too far out for the genial geniuses of your batty bullpen!

But now, alas, we have to part. Much as I'd like to linger longer, I have to respond to the most dramatic cry of all which just rang through the hall. So, as I rush to join the world's mightiest super heroes before the haunting echo of "AVENGERS ASSEMBLE" can die away, there's just barely time to remind you that no matter what happens, "Fata viam invenient!"

Excelsior!

– Stan Lee

HELLSTORM

Last summer, Marvel resurrected the Midnight Sons. This winter, Daimon Hellstorm gets a facelift for the '90's in an all new ongoing series, HELLSTORM: PRINCE OF LIES, premiering in February 1993, plotted and scripted by Rafael (TALES FROM THE HEART) Nieves with Michael (ALPHA FLIGHT, SPIDER-MAN: THE WAY TO DUSTY DEATH) Bair providing both pencils and inks.

Once called "the Son of Satan," Hellstorm is another of the key supernatural characters who, along with Ghost Rider, placed Marvel in the hearse-driver's seat of the 1970's horror comics revival. But according to Editor Fabian Nicieza, this Hellstorm is not the Hellstorm anyone remembers.

"Daimon is in a situation which will necessitate him being a master chessplayer and manipulator of the supernatural events which revolve around the characters of the Marvel Universe," Nicieza said. "Everything he has ever learned or thought about himself may be a lie. Everything he tells anyone else may end up being a lie. Anything he does may end up being a lie—*for all the right reasons or for all the wrong reasons.*"

So is he a good guy or a bad guy?

"Yes," Nicieza offered enigmatically.

Daimon Hellstorm was once a guy in a cape, red tights, and yellow boots who fought for the Defenders, but never more. This Hellstorm dresses in a business suit, and he has his Dark Soul resewn in his body's inner lining.

HELLSTORM is targeted to readers who crave more than just action,—Nicieza calls it GHOST RIDER meets *Sandman*—a truly "unique" addition to the Marvel Universe that will ultimately mean widespread and dire consequences for just about everyone in the supernatural end of it. And for the readers who would die for a chance to finally straighten out who's who in the Marvel hierarchy of demons, and which hell is which hell, Nicieza promises some real answers.

"One of the great things about horror is that it is all emotion..."

To start with, when asked for comparisons to other Marvel characters, Nicieza could only suggest that Daimon is "the supernatural equivalent of Dr. Doom...a power broker, a man of means and strength. I can see him becoming that, little by little again—all itf he chooses to." He added that he thinks readers are going to both like and hate Daimon Hellstorm depending on the situation. "He is capable of incredible compassion. He's also capable of incredible harshness. He's just as likely to slap you as he is to caress you."

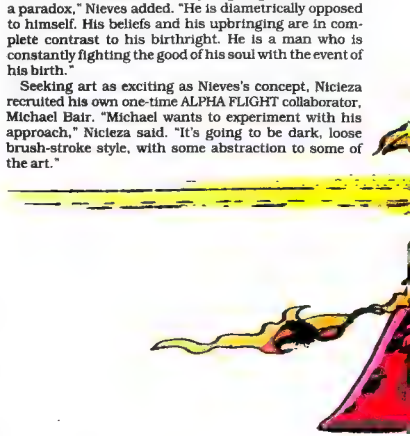
Nicieza leaped at the chance to totally revamp this classic occult hero. After requesting proposals from four writers, Nicieza chose the version by Rafael Nieves, a name less well-known to fans but who has attracted a strong cult following as co-writer for the Epic TALES FROM THE HEART.

"Fabian [told me he] wanted to add a harder edge to the character," Nieves said. "Then he cut me loose to run wild." Nieves was equally thrilled about tackling a horror project. No stranger to the genre and a huge Stephen King fan, he had attracted further fans from his work on a retelling and expansion of the film *Nosferatu* for Caliber Press.

"One of the great things about horror is that it is all emotion," he explained. "It's all about personalities and how a sense or emotion can be stretched to its limits.

"Daimon Hellstorm is a truly tragic figure in that he's a paradox," Nieves added. "He is diametrically opposed to himself. His beliefs and his upbringing are in complete contrast to his birthright. He is a man who is constantly fighting the good of his soul with the event of his birth."

Seeking art as exciting as Nieves's concept, Nicieza recruited his own one-time ALPHA FLIGHT collaborator, Michael Bair. "Michael wants to experiment with his approach," Nicieza said. "It's going to be dark, loose brush-stroke style, with some abstraction to some of the art."



"I'm creating a style for this book that's going to include everything that I've done, but it's definitely a style that I will use just for HELLSTORM, "Bair added. "I'm working at letting this book have its own atmosphere. We're trying to go for a '90's feel, an 'into the new millennium' kind of thing."

"Everything he has ever learned or thought about himself may be a lie."

OK, now, for the uninitiated: Daimon was this nice guy who discovered his father was a big-name demon, and this big-name demon left him a legacy— a Dark Soul that gave him certain powers but at a terrible cost.

"I have very weird plans for Patsy, unfortunately."

Eventually, he was able to get rid of it and kind of lead a normal life as an occult investigator. When he was a super hero with the Defenders, he met, fell in love with, and married fellow teammate Patsy (Hellcat) Walker. Then he retired. And then he got real sick, almost would have died if Patsy hadn't made this deal with these demons that gave him back his Dark Soul. *Because she loved him.*

"At the end of issue #2, you see her sitting in a bed," Nicieza said. "She's basically a drooling idiot. The minute he got his dark soul back, she saw him—the true him through all the lies, through all the deceits—and she couldn't handle it."

"I have very weird plans for Patsy, unfortunately," Nieves added. "Patsy, when we first see her, is loony. She's completely insane at this point. She's living in his Fire Lake, Massachusetts mansion, and eventually she will become a vessel for various disembodied guest stars. That's all I want to say for now."

Patsy Walker won't be the only familiar name in this title, nor the only old acquaintance unnerved by some rather radical changes. Early issues will feature guest appearances by Dr. Strange and Ghost Rider, and Nieves has resurrected two old but not extensively explored denizens of the macabre side of the Marvel Universe—the Gargoyle, a fellow ex-Defender, and Gabriel the Devil-Hunter.

"Issue #2 is basically 'My dinner with Stephen'," Nicieza said. "The whole issue is Hellstorm and Dr. Strange having dinner, and the two of them talk. The Hellstorm sitting in front of Dr. Strange is not the Hellstorm he used to know, and Daimon's saying 'you don't know me. *You have no idea who I am.*"

Isaac Christaans, a.k.a. the Gargoyle, serves as Patsy Walker's nurse and Daimon Hellstorm's valet of sorts. While researching THE DEFENDERS, Nieves was struck by the idea that "the Gargoyle is not only a very tragic character, but also rife with possibilities for humor and irony. He is a dichotomy in that he isn't a demon; he's merely an old man trapped in a demon's body."

Plot complications, however, may arise from the fact that the Gargoyle's number one hero is actually Dr. Strange, Nieves hinted. "Dr. Strange took him in and was a friend to him in the very beginning. While he is loyal to Hellstorm for taking him in now, for giving him a place to be himself, he still harbors a real sense of loyalty to Dr. Strange, and that will surface in later issues of the series."

While providing a strong supporting cast, the whole Defenders background did, however, pose problems for Nieves. The writer said that he felt that, while it was important to mention that part of Hellstorm's past "for the continuity of the book," the risk was getting "stilted by their presence."

"The conceit that I used was that Daimon Hellstorm as a child turned to comic books, as many of us did in our youth. When the opportunity presented itself to Daimon to go and try to save the world, as it were, he turned to his childhood love and became essentially a super hero, [trying] in some way to justify his very existence and his mission. Since that time, he's a little older, hopefully a little wiser, and he's decided he could do very well as Daimon Hellstorm and not the super heroic Son of Satan, thank you very much."

Nicieza put it simply: "he's embarrassed by it."

As for Gabriel the Devil-Hunter, Nieves admitted he just always had a weak spot for the character. According to Nieves, things haven't been going too well for the exorcist. His assistant has mysteriously disappeared, the exorcist-boom of the '70's has died down, he was stuck writing hack-work for the Weekly World Enquirer, and he was drowning his frustrations in booze.

"Gabriel and Hellstorm are in the same business, both being demonologists and devil-hunters, and yet they come from entirely different directions," Nieves explained. "I think it's going to make for a lot of really wonderful conflicts. Daimon, for reasons of his own, calls Gabriel back into the field and forces him to become an exorcist once again. It's much to Gabriel's dismay, though, because the last thing he wants to do is face those demons that he's fought again, not just in terms of the extradimensional demons but the demons of his soul and his past."

In terms of connections with the other macabre characters, according to Nicieza, Hellstorm looms "on the fringe of the Midnight Sons. He is sort of the Dawn or the Sunset of the Midnight Sons. Ghost Rider will appear in issue #4, and it will be a strained but cordial meeting. In his arrogance Hellstorm "considers Ghost Rider unimportant in the overall scheme of things. And Ghost Rider realizes that Hellstorm could be trouble down the road, but right now, he's better off not bothering."

And Johnny Blaze, when he was the original Ghost Rider, knew the Daimon of old. There are no plans though, for a Blaze/Hellstorm reunion in the first six issues, Nicieza said. He promised, however, that "eventually, there will be a connection."

In terms of mapping out the series in any more detail, Nicieza and Nieves noted that the series will go a long way to charting Marvel's many hells, both geographic and personal.

"He's not of the Dawn or the Sunset of the Midnight Sons."

"The first six issues are single-issue stories that all will show different aspects of Hellstorm's personality, little by little," Nicieza offered. "The second six issues are going to be an arc of stories which will involve Hellstorm's political status in the supernatural world, where he stands in place in terms of Mephisto, and what hell is, and again whether anything he was ever told is true or not.

"He is still under the assumption that he is the big muckamuck. Basically, much of the arrogance to which Hellstorm approaches everything is based on who he thinks he is. He thinks he's a big man, and if he finds out that he's not, what will that mean for him? It's like being told you're Ross Perot's son, and when you grow up you're told you're not really Ross Perot's son."

Nieves concluded, that what happens is "going to be a major, major deal in the Marvel Universe [that's] going to cause major ramifications for many Marvel titles. And certainly the reader is going to freak."

– *Anya Martin*

CENTER
BEYOND 3000

Welcome to another scintillating installment of *Epicenter Beyond 3000*, where we journey back centuries to examine an archeological mystery that has long baffled scholars—evidence of a strange force called "Groo." *Beyond 3000* talks to LIFE OF GROO authors Sergio Aragonés and Mark Evanier, the men responsible for the tawdry treatise that "Groo" was not a force of nature, but a human being.

We'll also hear from American correspondent Stephan Petrucha, who has interviewed Lance Barnes, a private struggling to survive in the recently nuclear devastated U.S. of A.

THE LIFE OF GROO

Scientists have long uncovered buried remains of lost cities laid to ruin. Most attributed the destruction to natural disasters: earthquakes volcanic eruptions, etc., but recently archeologists have found a common element among these digs—Groo.

The ancient ruins of Rome yielded the lost appendix of Emperor Nero's journal in which he recounted "Grooveni, Groovidi, Groovicci," or, "Groo came, Groo saw, Groo destroyed." Similar findings have been uncovered in other excavations. Originally considered a natural destructive force, Groo is now believed to have been, not an earthquake, but a man…

Archeologists Sergio Aragonés and Mark Evanier have uncovered "The Groo Scrolls," which they translated as THE LIFE OF GROO, to be released in March. According to Aragones and Evanier, Groo was the gourd-nosed son of a peasant who was cursed by an evil king/wizard named Battu, and so Groo was born without the ability to think. Doomed to a lifetime of stupidity, Groo was made more deadly by an innate prowess to fight. Groo, Sr., unable to cope with his carnage-ridden son, set the babe afloat on a river. Alas, Groo survived.

Evanier noted, "While digging through the remnants of the George Bush administration, we found the Village People, and also swords which we believe to be the swords of Groo. We think they are his because they're the only ones we found with frequent flyer mileage." What would possess Groo to destroy so much? "Stupidity," Evanier claimed. "We think Groo was a true barbarian. If someone bothered Groo, Groo would just bash him over the head with a stick. He was much more primal than Conan, and much more stupid."

LANCE BARNES: POST NUKE DICK

Shifting to present day 3000, U.S. correspondent Stephan Petrucha reports on the exploits of a private detective and survivor of the American Missile Mishap which laid to waste the former super power. His reports appear in the new Epic series LANCE BARNES: POST-NUKE DICK.

PETRUCHA: Lance, how does a super-dick such as yourself find work in the desolation that is now the United States?

BARNES: Desolation? Tell you the truth, I didn't notice much of a change. Parts of the country actually look better, and work's never a problem. Getting paid's the catch, and I don't come cheap. It takes at least a case of peaches to get me for the duration—not the contaminated stuff, either.

SP: You must have come across some unique characters in your travels. Could you share some of your most memorable moments?

LB: Let's see, there was the time I caught Peg (Lance's one-legged secretary) showering. But I guess you mean juicy stuff—like being caught in the desert with a hungry mutant pit-bull that didn't know "heel," or trying to prevent the vigilante The Dog Knight from being lynched, or when I went mano-a-mano with Tiny, the Cannibal Clown. And a day doesn't go by when I don't think of the People of the Frilly Undergarments. I was almost their king, y' know. Sure, I could've been happy, surrounded by women in lingerie for the rest of my life, but…

SP: There's much speculation as to how the missile incident occurred. Some even claim that you were present when the missiles were launched.

LB: It was an accident! An accident! How was I supposed to know which lousy wire to cut? I had two seconds to pick between red and green, and I picked wrong, okay? It's that simple. Besides, things haven't changed all that much. People still kill each other, still steal, still love, still hope, and the children still grow. So maybe they don't stop growing anymore, and maybe they don't always grow in the right shape, and maybe one or two have an extra eye, but they do grow. The way I figure it, maybe I did us a favor. We spent all those years sweating about nuclear holocaust—now we don't have to worry anymore.

TAKING ON THE A-TEAM

Bob Harras on writing the Avengers

Bob Harras is a multi-talented individual. As group editor of the X-MEN books, he steers all of the characters in Marvel's mutant universe. He received great acclaim for his writing on the NICK FURY VS. S.H.I.E.L.D. limited series, and now he has turned his attentions to another group of Marvel's premiere super heroes, THE AVENGERS.

For the past year, Bob has teamed with penciler Steve Epting and inker Tom Palmer to chronicle the adventures of Earth's mightiest heroes. As the writer for THE AVENGERS, Bob has taken the years of history and tradition behind the team and given them his own slant.

"The Avengers are a group of heroes who are seeking friendship within a group of peers. They are established heroes who have earned their reputation. A hero has to earn the right to be an Avenger, but what makes them special is the code of ethics behind the team. The team is steeped in tradition," Bob said.

But the traditions behind the Avengers have caused some friction among the team during Bob's reign. The outcome of "Operation: Galactic Storm" created a rift between Captain America, the man many consider the quintessential Avenger, and the rest of the team.

"The killing of the Supreme Intelligence went against everything Cap stands for and everything he feels that The Avengers should stand for. Because of his feelings, I had him leave the team. To be perfectly honest, I don't mind him being gone from the book. He's a great character, but when he's on the team, he dominates it. The book almost becomes 'Captain America and his Avengers.' Cap is such a strong character that the rest of the team follows his agenda almost blindly. That tends to drive a lot of the tension from the stories," Bob said.

"A hero has to earn the right to be an Avenger. . ."

Bob's removal of Captain America was also in keeping with his plans to focus on some of the other characters from the Avengers' past. The Avengers team now includes Crystal, the Black Knight, Sersi, the Black Widow, Hercules, and the Vision. Bob put together this group of characters for a specific reason — to bring back the family feeling to the Avengers. Bob feels that this family

feeling has been missing in the book for quite some time.

"The problem I've had with the Avengers in recent years was that every writer who came in would throw out the current team and bring in all new Avengers. You can't establish any feelings among the characters that way. I'm trying to establish a specific group of characters that the reader cares about, and who care about each other. I've stabilized the membership; the team has been the same for more than a year now. I think that's a record over the past ten years. By doing this I'm able to build stories out of the characters rather than building them around finding new Avengers every few months," he said.

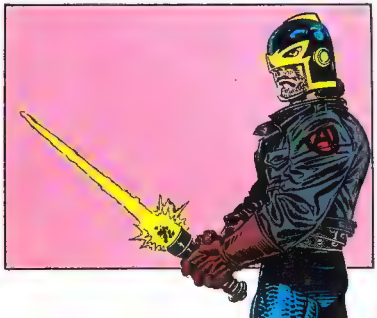
Bob's AVENGERS differs from past versions of the team because none of the characters currently on the team is featured in a solo comic, although Captain America and Thunderstrike will return to the team as the 30th anniversary year progresses.

"By putting some of the lesser-known characters from Avengers history on the team, I can play with them a little. I can develop personalities and create conflicts within the team. Also, by using some of the "working-class heroes," I give the book a more 'every man' feel. A lot of these characters have been around the Avengers for a very long time, but very little has been done with them as Avengers. Also, since these characters are minor-leaguers, they can be unsure of themselves and have to lean on one another. That goes back to establishing the family feeling I'm looking for," Bob said.

Bob provided a brief rundown on each of the characters on his team.

Hercules

"I like Herc because he's been around forever. He's one of those Avengers who's come and gone a lot over the years. He was on the team before I came on the book, and I kept him around because I felt that he had become too big of a buffoon — too cartoonish — so I'm attempting to show a more serious side to him. The Taylor Madison storyline that is currently running in the book will really develop Hercules in a direction he hasn't gone in while. It's also nice to have a big, strong guy on the team, too."



The Black Knight

"The Knight is the character that I hope readers relate to the most. He's never really been developed into a complete character. Over the years he's been a Captain America clone, a hero from the past who spoke in 'thees and thous,' and a sort of villain. I see him as just a normal guy with some interesting gadgets. Of course now he's surrounded by gods, androids, Inhumans and ex-Russian spies. Naturally he occasionally becomes overwhelmed by it all."

"Of course now he's surrounded by gods, androids, Inhumans and ex-Russian spies."

The Vision

"The Vision is the longest running Avenger currently on the team. He has great potential as a character. He's this android who used to have a wife and kids, but who's reverted back to his robotic form. Now he has nothing. There's a lot that can be done with this. He's kind of like a blank slate that I can build on."

Crystal

"Crystal is a ripple character. She's the one character that I chose specifically for the team. She has so many connections in the rest of the Marvel Universe that lots of stories seem to flow out of her. She's married to Pietro from X-Factor. She's the mother of Magneto's granddaughter. She's an Inhuman. She's a former member of the Fantastic Four. So much has happened to her that can have effects across the entire world of Marvel.

"I also put her into the book so that she can be the 'New Avenger.' I can use her for reactions to the team and the way they work together. Since I was new to the team, I thought I should have a character who was new, too. And it doesn't hurt to have a female character to develop romantic storylines around."

Sersi

"Sersi was on the team when I took over the the book and, like I said, I didn't want to throw out everybody and start from scratch. So I kept her around. At first I didn't really know what to do with her. In fact, I don't think anybody ever really did. She was just suddenly a member of the team. I didn't feel like she had a reason for joining or a reason to be on the team once she was there. I've now found the handle on her. She's less of a party-girl. I've given her a down side, and hopefully I've made her more three dimensional. I feel that she's now a far more interesting character."

Black Widow

"The Widow is another character who was there when I took over. She's a leader-type character, and since I was having Cap leave the team, Natasha was the natural to take over as chairman. What I find interesting about her is that she realizes that her powers aren't really built for Avengers-style villains. She's willing to lead the team and not participate in the battles. She handles the day-to-day routine, and yet she is definitely in charge. The others on the team respect her."

Bob has also created The Gatherers, a new group of villains to oppose the Avengers. They have appeared through most of Bob's run on the series and will continue to plague the Avengers throughout their 30th anniversary year. The Gatherers are a group of super-powered characters from other dimensions who favorably match up to Harras's Avengers. They are led by the mysterious Proctor.

"If you look back at the Avengers rogues gallery, it's just not that strong. There's Ultron and there's Kang. Then there were teams like the Masters of Evil. The Masters of

Evil were this group of villains who would get together and attack the Avengers for no apparent reason. Why would anyone go looking for that kind of abuse? I'm not sure I could name a member of the Masters of Evil. They didn't have a purpose," Bob said.

"With the Gatherers I've created a team of villains that has a reason to attack the Avengers. They aren't a mirror image of the Avengers, but their agenda is concentrated solely on the Avengers. Proctor is particularly interested in Sersi."

". . .the Avengers and the X-Men [will join] forces to take on Fabian Cortez and the Acolytes of Magneto."

Bob has also planned a crossover between Marvel's two 30th anniversary teams with the Avengers and the X-Men joining forces to take on Fabian Cortez and the Acolytes of Magneto.

"The two teams are interesting to write in the same story because they are so different. The X-Men are together because they have to be. They have a specific mission to carry out — preserving Professor Xavier's dream. The Avengers' purpose is less clear. They don't have a specific dream. They are together more out of a need for a group of heroes who must deal with menaces that are too powerful to be dealt with by any one single hero. The Avengers membership is more fluid. The X-Men membership is more static. By teaming the X-Men and X-Factor with The Avengers, I'm able to write some really terrific interaction between different kinds of heroes," Bob said.

The X-Men-Avengers crossover is one of the stories that exemplifies Bob's use of Crystal as a ripple effect character. Magneto's Acolytes will return in the X-MEN and kidnap Magneto's granddaughter, Luna. Since Luna is the daughter of Crystal and Quicksilver of (X-Factor), the kidnapping sets The Avengers, X-Factor, and The X-Men on the trail of the Acolytes. It also brings Quicksilver into the romantic triangle of Crystal, Sersi and the Black Knight, making it a romantic rectangle.

"I think this story will be similar to many of my favorite Avengers stories, like the Kree-Skrull War and Steve Englehart's Mantis saga. Not that the stories are all that similar, but they are big adventure stories with small 'people stories' as their basis. It was the soap opera elements in THE AVENGERS that brought me back month to month when I was a reader, and I think it's also what keeps people coming back to books like the X-Men. That's all I'm really trying to do with the book. I'm trying to establish in THE AVENGERS a reason for the readers to want to come back issue after issue like they've been doing for the past 30 years."

(Next issue: Roy Thomas reveals his plans for AVENGERS WEST COAST during the upcoming anniversary year.)

— Randy Meredith

UNDER THE SEA
Harras on NAMOR

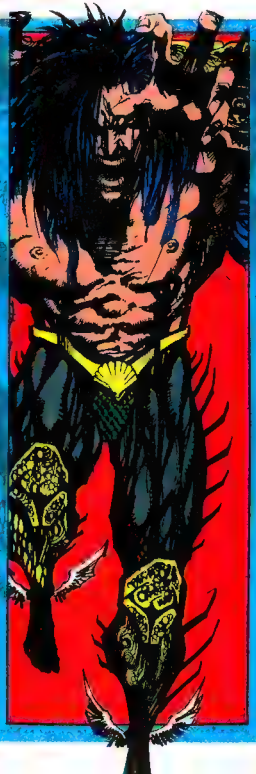
For Bob Harras, being the new writer on NAMOR, THE SUB-MARINER is a dream come true. The character is one of his all-time favorites, so when Editor Terry Kavanagh asked Harras to take over the book he "didn't have to twist my arm too hard," Bob revealed.

"The appeal of Namor for me is similar to the appeal of Wolverine to the kids today. He was the ultimately powerful character with an incredibly savage streak to him. I also like the solitariness of the character. Namor is half-human and half-Atlantean; he doesn't fit in on the surface world, and he doesn't fit in in Atlantis. I think that's why he works so hard to make the world accept the Atlanteans. He feels that if the surface dwellers accept the undersea people, that he will gain acceptance for himself," Bob said.

Bob plans to explore the Atlantean side of Namor's character in his first storyline for the book. The story revolves around a growing evil in the undersea city.

"The evil will draw Namor back to Atlantis and force him to ally with many of his greatest enemies like Attuma, Krang, and Tiger Shark. The story gives me a chance to explore Atlantis, something I don't think has been done very extensively in Namor's history," Bob said.

In addition to teaming Namor up with his enemies, Bob will build a new supporting cast for Namor in Atlantis.



"One of the things that I feel has been missing from Namor in the past year was Namor himself. The book revolved around so many other characters that Namor was almost pushed out of his own book. I'm bringing back Vashti, and Seth. They will become characters whose lives revolve around Namor's and bring him back to the center of the series."

"He was the ultimately powerful character with an incredibly savage streak to him."

Bob also plans to explore Namor's love life in the series.

"Namor hasn't had a lot of luck in the love department. He's had two wives die on him in the past ten years or so. I'm going to reintroduce Tamara, an alien that I'm sure most readers won't even remember. I want to explore the relationship and how the blue-skinned Atlanteans react to the fact that their white-skinned prince — who is a half-breed to begin with — is falling in love with a red-skinned alien. I hope to get into some racial issues through that plot line," Bob said.

"I'm really excited to be working on the book and especially to be working with Jae Lee. Jae's version of the character is really terrific. It's very dynamic. We're taking NAMOR in an entirely different direction than the book has gone in so far. I hope it will be entertaining and just a whole lot of fun," Bob said.

– *Randy Meredith*

Mark's REMARKS

Up this month, random observations about Earth's mightiest super hero team, by the guy who edited their book longer than anyone.

1

If I were a super hero, I'd want to hang around with other super heroes. That's the appeal of a team book, seeing super heroes interact with their peers. Sure, it's interesting to see how civilians relate to super heroes, but I like to know what goes on behind closed doors, what the real pecking order is among the superhuman elite, who gets along with whom and who thinks who's a blowhard. Of all the team books ever done, THE AVENGERS does this best.

2

The difference between groups and teams: a group is any collection of individuals with something in common, such as an ethnic group, a social group, a mutant rights group, etc. A team is a collection of individuals, united in purpose and action: such as a sports team, a debate team, a drill team. The Avengers is a team. Infinity Watch is a group.

I've heard a lot of artists say they hate drawing group books. I couldn't figure this out at first—after all, aren't all books group books? Doesn't every solo hero have a group of supporting characters? Then I realized that what these artists disliked was executing the choreography of multiple individuals in action together. That is, indeed, a lot harder than drawing a single hero against a single villain. Artists vary drastically in their ability to depict simultaneous multiple actions. The best AVENGERS artists—like John Buscema, John Byrne, and Steve Epting—are the best action choreographers. They can draw multiple actions on multiple planes in the same panel, clearly showing the relationship of each hero to the others at any given moment.

3

I always had a problem with the world's mightiest super-team relying on one man, good ol' Jarvis, to do everything from cooking to coordinating field assignments. It may have been fine in the early days, when the Avengers were little more than a social club for super heroes, but now they're the preeminent super-hero peacekeeping force! Under my editorial tenure, I instituted Jarvis's staff. It's not that we have to see a lot of them in any issue; it's just comforting to know they're there.

I love knowing the rules and regulations by which organizations are supposed to act. When I was the AVENGERS editor, I reread all the back issues trying to come up with the team's standard operating procedures. Then I commissioned writer Roger Stern to write the Avengers charter. To me, it would be next to impossible to write or edit a single story of a team before I knew exactly how that team was supposed to function. It is also grist for a hundred stories that contrast the way a team's *supposed* to act with the way the members of a team actually do act.

4

My favorite all-time AVENGERS storylines: 1. Kree-Skrull War. . . 2. The Korvac saga. . . 3. The Scarlet

Witch/Wundagore/Chthon three-parter (which, immodestly enough, I co-plotted). . . 4. The Kang/Celestial Madonna Quest. . .

My least favorite AVENGERS storylines: 1. The Hank and Jan Pym break-up. . . 2. Ms. Marvel gets pregnant by Marcus Immortus. . . 3. Acts of Vengeance. . .

Funny story about Ms. Marvel and Marcus Immortus: In the original scenario Marcus wasn't supposed to be the father of Carol Danvers' "child," the Supreme Intelligence was. The child in AVENGERS #200 was supposed to be a newborn cosmic baby with the S.I.'s spaghetti-head look. But a WHAT IF story about the Kree-Skrull War came out around the same time, with a plot featuring a Supreme Intelligence spawn, so the editor in chief ordered writer David Michelinie to find a different father. Thus the nonsensical finale of issue #200!

5

My favorite Avengers line-up to date: Captain America, Iron Man, Thor, Vision, Scarlet Witch, Yellowjacket, and the Wasp. It's got the big three, plus two very different couples. While Cap, Thor, and Iron Man were always the heart of the Avengers, the Vision and Scarlet Witch were the soul. Watching their arduous relationship grow was one of the book's biggest pleasures in the '70's. When they got married, all the dramatic tension dissolved from their relationship, and there was nothing comparable to take its place! (Finally now, with the Crystal-Black Knight-Sersi triangle, we have something romantically interesting going on!) I like the Vision's reversion to his original personality. It feels like I've gotten the true Vision back after all these years. (But do something about that milk-white suit you're wearing, Vizh!)

My least favorite Avengers line-up: Cap, Iron Man, Thor, Tigra, and Wasp. No romance.

Good characters who should never have become Avengers: Mister Fantastic, Invisible Woman, Moon Knight, Spider-Man, and Sandman.

Folks who seriously need to become Avengers: Thundra, Giant-Man, Will O' The Wisp, and Iron Fist.

6

Sometimes I regret having invented the West Coast Avengers. It came out of a discussion I had with then-AVENGERS writer Roger Stern. We were doing the "Ultimate Vision" storyline which culminated in #254, and I said, "We've got to make this a big deal, have this story change their status quo forever." We had the Vision plan an international Avengers organization with franchises all over the place. He only got as far as a West Coast branch before his sinister programming was discovered. So why do I regret the AWC's existence? Well, to legitimatize the second team, we wanted one of the founding Avengers in the line-up. Iron Man was out west at the time, so we designated him as the old-time mainstay. I now realize that, in doing so, I permanently discombobulated the Cap, Thor, Iron Man trinity that is at the Avengers' core. *Mea culpa.*

7

Both Avengers teams need more good villains. The only good Avengers villains are those powerful enough to give the whole team a run for its money. I mean, once you go past Kang and Ultron, who else is there? It's amazing that the team has lasted 30 years and still has so few recurring villains. Immortus? Too much like Kang, too ambiguous in his villainy. Grim Reaper? Not as yet powerful enough to take them all on. Nebula? She's in Silver Surfer terrain now. Who else is there? I must admit that the new guys Bob Harras has whipped up — Proctor and his Gatherers — are very intriguing. Time will tell if they become big-time.

8

When we wrote the MARVEL UNIVERSE Avengers Mansion entry, we decided to determine where the building was located. In all past stories, it was on Fifth Avenue facing Central Park, so I personally scouted Fifth Avenue from 59th Street all the way uptown along the park. The block between 70th and 71st Streets caught my eye. On it is the Frick Museum, a dead ringer for the original Avengers Mansion! Wonder if this was the inspiration 'way back when the mansion was first designed?

And once, when AVENGERS Editor Ralph Macchio and I visited Los Angeles, WEST COAST scribe Roy Thomas gave us directions to Palos Verde Drive. We drove right past where we calculated the West Coast compound to be.

I have a difficult time deciding whether I'd prefer the New York headquarters or the Palos Verde Compound. Hacienda architecture or steel, glass and concrete? Bungalows or a view of the park? Barbecues or Sersi's ultra-trendy Manhattan parties? Hmm. Which would you choose?

9

Special notes to kids who play the Avengers in the back yard: The best Avengers to impersonate in order to maximize the action are: Cap, Hawkeye, Quicksilver, Black Knight, Thor, Wonder Man, Mockingbird, and She-Hulk.

A. Cap: A garbage can cover will make an adequate Cap's shield, but make sure it's a plastic one before you throw.

B. Hawkeye: Try that new Nerf crossbow, and don't expect a boxing-glove arrow to fly very far.

C. Quicksilver: when running at super speed, make a distinctive verbal "speed whine." When everyone hears it, they have to shift to slow motion.

D. Black Knight: plastic swords only — wood hurts.

E. Thor: A croquet mallet hammer works fine, but remember — Thor never throws Mjolnir at mere mortals, and neither should you. Just use it for deflecting projectiles, smashing cardboard walls or doors down, and summoning lightning.

G. Wonder Man and She-Hulk: every "normal strength" opponent has to agree to pull punches and collapse at your every touch. After all, you're super strong.

H. Mockingbird: For battle-staves, I recommend empty wrapping paper tubes or plastic toy nunchakus, taken apart.

I. Avoid Yellowjacket, Goliath, Scarlet Witch, Captain Marvel, and Quasar. Their powers are next to impossible to simulate without having to constantly explain to your playmates what you've just done to them.

That's it for me. 'Til next time and forever — Avengers Assemble!

- Mark Gruenwald

The 'NAM

Tim Tuohy, assistant editor of THE 'NAM, has been a very busy man. Since his boss, Editor Don Daley, handed over editorial control of the book to him, Tim's been putting in long hours to make it one of Marvel's finest with new creative talent, controversial storylines, special collector covers, and a return-to-reality philosophy.

THE 'NAM began with the basic concept of showing a grunt's eye view of the Vietnam War. In recent years, the book deviated from that path somewhat. Now, six years and numerous editors, writers and artists later, THE 'NAM has returned to its original concept. "I want the book to be informative and entertaining," Tim said. "I want to show the readers what *really* went on." 'NAM writer Don Lomax echoed that sentiment, "I see it as historical fiction," he said, "based on actual events and using fictional characters. I've been trying to get the book as accurate as I can, with believable characters and stories close to what went down over there."

Lomax should have a good idea of what went down over there. A Vietnam vet and war historian, he is not a typical comic book writer. Lomax has spent years researching, writing and talking to veterans about the war. "I've corresponded with quite a few vets over the years," he said. "There's a little piece of all of 'em in my stories." Don also wrote and penciled the *Vietnam Journal* and the *Desert Storm Journal* for Apple Comics. "Don's breathing life baek into THE 'NAM," said artist Wayne Vansant. "He tells a dang good story."

Together, Lomax and Tuohy have come up with a new format for the series: a 16-page lead story followed by a 6-page "Stateside" tale. The lead stories are seen through the eyes of journalist Ed Marks. Ed was introduced early in the book's run as a buck private. Always a popular character, he was later discharged from the military. Don decided to bring him back with a college degree and a new job as an Associated Press newswriter. Ed is now the "star" of the book, experiencing the events along with the reader. The stateside six-pagers also bring back popular characters but take place back home in the U.S. These stories illustrate the lingering effects of the war on the men who were there, and its devastating effects on American society.

Just as Don Lomax is not a typical comic book writer, Wayne Vansant is not a typical comic book artist. A Vietnam-era veteran himself, he feels that, since no war looks like a comic book, THE 'NAM shouldn't look like one. "He gives the book the feel it should have," Lomax said. "He gets as close to reality as anyone could." That real-feel isn't something Vansant has had to work at. "I never tried to develop a specific style," he said, "it just comes from years and years of reading and talking to folks about the war." Vansant *does* use the faces of real people as models for the characters. "Yeah," he joked, "I've killed off my brother-in-law lots of times." Wayne believes in realism, but not in violence. "I don't think you have to draw blood 'n' guts and use profanity to accurately show what happened," he said. "We do realistic stories of a war, yet we're one of the most non-violent books out there."

Part of the more realistic format is a *less* realistic timeline. THE 'NAM was originally created to be a 96-issue limited series. The concept was that each issue would represent one month of real time. The 96 issues would chronicle eight years of American presence in Vietnam, ending with the fall of Saigon in 1975. Although not

eliminating the timeline completely, Don is getting away from the one month per issue structure. "We lose too many stories that way," he explained. "It's almost impossible to sum up everything that happened in one issue. In the original timeline, Tet was glossed over in one issue. Now, with issues 79-81, we're going back and telling it right."

Lomax is referring to the Tet Offensive, a massive assault of thousands of North Vietnamese troops on more than 100 South Vietnamese cities, generally considered the turning point of the war. After the assault and the loss of countless lives, American troops found themselves fighting a demoralizing media inspired uphill war that ended in their eventual withdrawal. In issues #79-81, entitled, "The Beginning of the End," reporter Ed Marks interviews a platoon sergeant who was on the front line and gives Ed a graphic, first-hand description of what happened. For this tensely pivotal story, Tim has planned special tryptich covers penciled inked and colored by Michael Golden, the original penciler on THE 'NAM. His tryptich will form a panorama depicting the varied locales involved in the offensive.

Tim's agenda for upcoming stories covers the next two years, and includes a story told from the perspective of a North Vietnamese soldier' and the war's effect on his family and country. This story is being drawn by an artist whom Tim refers to as, "the South American Michael Golden" whose art will "blow people's socks off." Also planned is a piece recounting the Hue Massacre, an offensive which led to the slaughter of more than 3,000 civilians by North Vietnamese forces. Tim has another three-parter in the works which breaks the tradition he helped create: a wholly fictional, action-oriented, *Apocalypse Now* type of story. Tim promises "completely off-the-wall, explosions left and right, over the top issues." These will also feature a Michael Golden cover tryptich.

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The fictional action continues with another three-part storyline featuring the return of the most popular character to ever appear in the series—The Punisher. Tim referred to it as "the definitive Frank Castle Vietnam War history" because it addresses many of the unanswered questions from Frank Castle's past, such as how he was able to serve more than three tours of duty, why he changed his name from Castiglione, and what the events were that led to his trip home to receive the Congressional Medal of Honor. This tale of disillusionment plants in the mind of the young, idealistic, war hero the psychological seeds which will blossom with his transformation into the ruthless vigilante.

"Vietnam scarred all of us," Lomax concluded, "not just the people who were there. It changed the government, it changed the world. If you want to find out what really happened 25 years ago, reading this will explain it and help put into perspective attitudes people have now."

War is hell. THE 'NAM is a scrapbook reliving memories of hell.

– *Matt Morra*

I SHOULD NEVER HAVE LET THAT MYSTERIOUS SUMMONS LURE ME FROM ASGARD -- WHY AM I IN THIS BLASTED DESERT??
HEMBECK
HOLD ON, TALL, DARK, AND HOOK-NOSED -- ALL WILL BE EXPLAINED!
eh? A VOICE FROM NOWHERE?!?..
NOT EXACTLY, FELLA. MAYBE NOW YOU'LL FIND ME EASIER TO DEAL WITH.
THE WASP!! WHY HAVE YOU TRICKED ME INTO COMING HERE? IF YOU AND YOUR ACCURSED AVENGER TEAMMATES PLAN AN AMBUSH...
QUITE THE CONTRARY, LOKI. I'VE INVITED YOU HERE TO BE GUEST OF HONOR AT A 30th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION OF THE TEAM'S EXISTENCE.
ME?
BUT-- WHY??
MU. HOW SOON THEY FORGET. I'M SURPRISED THE PRINCE OF MISCHIEF DOESN'T RECALL HOW HE ATTEMPTED TO PIT THE HULK VERSUS HIS HALF-BROTHER THOR IN THIS VERY DESERT, INADVERTENTLY BRINGING TOGETHER THOSE TWO, IRON MAN, ANT MAN AND YOURS TRULY TO FOUND THE AVENGERS!
BAH. NOT ONE OF MY BETTER SCHEMES.
Oh, LIGHTEN UP, ASGARDIAN. THERE'S GONNA BE CAKE, TOO.
CAKE, TOO??..
Ah, HERE COME SOME OF THE EARLY ARRIVALS.
LOKI!??
WHAT IS HE DOING HERE??
I'M SURPRISED AT YOU, JANET. I NEVER WOULD HAVE LEFT YOU IN CHARGE OF THE PARTY IF I KNEW YOU WERE GOING TO INVITE LOKI.
SORRY YOU FEEL THAT WAY, IRON MAN, BUT ACTUALLY IT WAS CAPTAIN AMERICA'S IDEA.
WHAA-- AAAT?!
REMEMBER WHEN I ASKED YOUR ADVICE ABOUT WHAT THE PARTY NEEDED? AND YOU SAID, "LOKI"?
JANET...
-- I SAID "LOW KEY"!!
..oh.
oops.
heh...
DOES THIS MEAN I DON'T GET CAKE?..
*

Hot Sheet

This month, Marvel Comics and the "Hot Sheet" go to the movies, visit hell, and head off to war — not to mention taking a quick trip to the comic store. So, without further ado, pop some corn, and lock 'n' load!

AT THE MOVIES, MARVEL STYLE

A lot of great movies hit the screen every year, and some of the better ones have comic book-style storytelling (such as fast-paced action, high adventure, and stunning heroes). Sometimes, these stellar flicks become colossal comics. Well, this February, Marvel returns to a big screen feature and turns it into a smash limited series with the release of DARKMAN #1. This six-issue celluloid romp continues the story Marvel first adapted in 1991. Darkman is back and he's filled with a dark obsession, dealing with a bunch of death wielding crooks while trying to regain his humanity. The series, written by Kurt Busiek, penciled by Javier Saltares, and inked by Andrew Pepoy is filled with horror, drama, and a dash of the tongue-in-cheek vileness that made the *Darkman* movie a cult classic. Marvel editor Rob (SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN) Tokar expects great things from this new book. "DARKMAN done right can be grotesque," he said, "so I'm all for a new limited series — Busiek and Saltares can sure hit the grotesque horror mark."

Retailer Mark Minoff of Toronto, Canada's *Silver Snail* comic book store thinks *Darkman* lends itself perfectly to comic book continuation. "Well, what can I say? Darkman back in action — he's one of my favorite movie characters. He's a cross between *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Faust* with a chunk of 'mad scientist' all rolled up into one. Darkman is truly a creature driven by his own madness and inner torment, creating a most unpredictable anti-hero." Minoff also feels that the creative team is aptly suited for this project. "It's great to see Javier Saltares back, doing what he does best. Who else could produce a better setting for DARKMAN than the man who gave us back GHOST RIDER?"

Another big screen hero set to crash through theater doors and onto comic shop shelves is Meteor Man, who's set for a March debut. The *Meteor Man* movie and the one-issue Marvel adaptation follow the story of a neurotic school teacher whose life is turned upside-down when he gains a slew of super powers on top of all his other problems! Really, now, how's a man to cope? Then, following the movie adaptation, get set for the METEOR MAN six-issue limited series. And, as if transfering on-screen excitement to the comic page isn't enough, METEOR MAN will take place in the regular Marvel Universe; providing just the sort of support group a neophyte hero with personal problems needs! The series, written by Dwight Coye, and drawn by Robert Walker, has created quite a stir with the potential of this historic meeting of movie hero and the Marvel mainstream. Chris Cooper, writer of the hit DARKHOLD series and editor of CAGE, summed up everyone's feeling, simply stating, that he's "really curious how Meteor Man will react with the Marvel Universe. [Except for the occasional CONAN reference or WHAT IF?] this hasn't really been done before." In March, everyone will get a chance to see history in the making!

WHOSE HELL IS IT ANYWAY?

In February, Marvel Comics and Epic Comics both go to hell, but in separate handbaskets. Marvel is first to arrive with the release of HELLSTORM, an all-new series by writer Rafael (TALES FROM THE HEART) Nieves and artist Michael Bair (who recently completed the SPIDER-MAN & DOCTOR STRANGE bookshelf special). HELLSTORM will follow the exploits of Daimon Hellstorm, the original Son of Satan. This horror/super hero series will be filled with mystery and action, and promises to appeal to fans of the high-impact thrills of the various MIDNIGHT SONS titles (GHOST RIDER, MORBIUS, etc.) and the thought provoking themes of *Sandman*. One such MIDNIGHT SON, Chris Cooper, is excited by the advent of this series. "HELLSTORM is in the same genre as DARKHOLD; it should prove to be offbeat. Overall, it'll be a nice complementary series to the MIDNIGHT SONS titles."

David Torgerson of Wisconsin-based *Westfield Comics* also sees the potential in HELLSTORM. "Another of Marvel's forgotten heroes returns in a brand new series," Torgerson stated. "I enjoyed the old Son of Satan run in MARVEL PREMIERE from the '70's, and I'm sure that I'll enjoy this as well. Remember when Ghost Rider came back and took everyone by surprise? The possibility exists for HELLSTORM to do the same thing."

Not to be outdone, Epic Comics turned to their own son of satan, Clive Barker, to be their tour guide to the world down under. Barker, who's vision of Hell can be seen every month in Epic's HELLRAISER series, gives us a double dose of the evil Leviathan and the sinister Cenobites in THE HARROWERS. This new series will follow the horrific exploits of a band of Hell-bound warriors set on releasing the innocent souls captured by evil. The new series will be written by Barker and his Zinc Inc. Studio crew and will have art by master of the macabre Gene Colan with additional material by favorites like Sam Kieth, Kelley Jones, and Simon Bisely. Buzz around the book has reached a fever pitch. "It's about time someone took on Leviathan and this team of Hellraiders are just the ones to do it," Steve Snyder of Ohio's *Central City Comics* stated emphatically. "From their original appearance in HELLRAISER, I knew this team would be terrific. Now they're in their own book and with pedigrée creators including Clive Barker, Sam Keith,

and Kelley Jones! All right!!" Gary Colabuono of Chicago retail store *Moondog's Comics* agrees with these sentiments. "Gene Colan," he pointed out, "is an extraordinary artist. His stints on DAREDEVIL and DRACULA were the stuff of comics legend. No one, I mean *no one*, has ever come close to being his equal when it comes to depicting the macabre through mood and motion. So when I realized he'll be a contributor to a new title operating in the Barker HELLRAISER universe, I have to admit I was quite delighted. Then when I read that THE HARROWERS will also benefit from regular contributions from the considerable horror-laden artistic talents of Keith, Jones, and Bisely, I was beside myself with anticipation. I'm looking forward to many sleepless nights!"

LANCE BARNES: POST-NUKE DICK. TM & © 1993 Stefan Petrucha & Barry Crain

WHO'S THE DICK WHO DROPPED THE BOMB?

As if taking on hell isn't enough for Epic Comics, they've also decided to blow up the world. Well, not the whole world, as can be seen in LANCE BARNES: POST NUKE DICK, a four-issue series set in a post-nuked out world filled with hapless victims, mutant dogs, and killer clowns. LANCE BARNES, written by Stephan Petrucha and drawn by Barry Crain, is not for the faint of humor; it's for readers who want to laugh in the face of someone else's tragedy (while thanking Heaven that they weren't the dufus who caused such misery). Gary Colabuono had much to say about LANCE BARNES. "Marvel and Epic have sure been offering some off-beat stuff lately. The latest entry is LANCE BARNES. It's a post-nuclear holocaust comedy featuring a Humphrey Bogart-like hard-boiled detective. The return of Chicago resident penciler Barry Crain's considerable talents to the drawing board is a genuine treat. He has such a wild and crazy fractured sense of humor! In the very first issue Crain proves beyond any reasonable doubt that he draws the most excellent demented killer clowns in the business!" So zip up your radiation suit, check your compassion at the the door, and join Epic at the end of the world.

WAR IS BREAKING OUT ALL OVER

Back inside the Marvel Universe, Marvel UK ties itself and its heroes even closer to their U.S. counterparts with two new limited series, SHADOW RIDERS (now scheduled for April release) and MyS-TECH WARS. All of the new Marvel UK titles have been filled with action, great art, and inspired writing, and these two books will further push the envelope of excitement. In SHADOW RIDERS, by John Freeman and Charlie Adlard, readers are introduced to a new good-guy/tough-bunch biker gang who get its baptism of fire alongside Cable and Ghost Rider! Their target is none other than the malicious Mephisto, so the action will be fast and hot, to say the least. In MyS-TECH WARS, nearly the entire Marvel UK and Marvel US Universes become embroiled in a battle for Earth, against a band of high-tech other-worldly demons! The four-issue series is written by Dan (PUNISHER) Abnett and drawn by Brian Hitch. "With all of Marvel UK's heroes, the X-Men, The Avengers, and a voodoo doll of Earth, this series has enough action for three or four regular series," Steve Snyder explained. "Brian Hitch's art looks gorgeous on this book. This series will be red hot!"

THE AIRTIGHT GARAGE: TM & © 1993 Starwatcher Graphics.

HIGHLIGHTS NOT TO BE MISSED

Finally, no "Hot Sheet" would be complete without a run down of some books that no one will want to miss, as recommended by editors and retailers around the comic industry.

DEATHLOK Editor Tom Brevoort wants to be sure that readers don't pass by two of his favorites, DOCTOR STRANGE and THE REN & STIMPY SHOW. "I've had the pleasure of reading Len Kaminski's proposal for what he's going to do as the new writer on DOC STRANGE and it's going to be way cool! Kaminski is this year's Marvel MVP; he's revamped IRON MAN, cracked us up with SLAPSTICK, and terrifies us in MORBIUS. Now, DOCTOR STRANGE has a new, exciting spark. And for laughs to go with SLAPSTICK, there's the REN & STIMPY SHOW comic. It's the next best thing to new episodes, even if the comic doesn't have moving pictures."

From the fantastical to the historical, readers can get a dose of the real world in THE 'NAM. "There are few creators who could handle the deeply moving historical aspects of the Tet Offensive as well as Don Lomax and Wayne Vansant, beginning with issue #79 of THE 'NAM," stated the folks at *Central City Comics*. "These two creators bring inside knowledge to the series and present war as it really is — no glory, no breath-taking battle scenes, just the true dirt and grit and horror that was Vietnam. In many ways, THE 'NAM is the scariest book Marvel publishes."

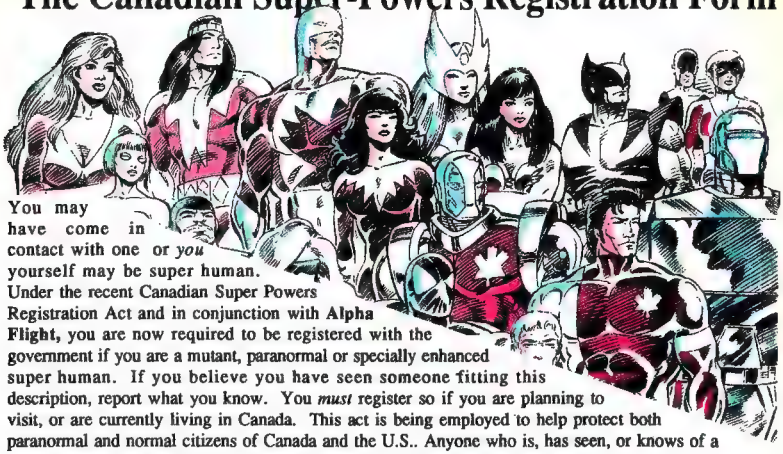
Retail store owner Steve Gursky of the New Jersey and Pennsylvania chain *Steve's Comic Relief* has a soft spot for anything produced by French creator/artist Moebius. "AIRTIGHT GARAGE is proclaimed a 'sweet story,'" Gursky pointed out, "and any opportunity [such as the upcoming four-issue standard format reprint of this graphic novel] to share more Moebius art and stories with the public is sweet indeed. And while we're talking about Moebius, he isn't just a master of science-fiction [as shown in AIRTIGHT GARAGE] and a dabbler in cosmic super heroes [as seen in the SILVER SURFER project he did with Stan Lee years ago]. If your're interested in down to earth, gritty Westerns, then pick up his BLUEBERRY series."

Ah yes, what a great way to wrap up Winter and get ready for the world to bloom again!

— Jerry A. Novick

EDITOR'S NOTE: As this issue was going to press, it was decided that THE HARROWERS would be held back for release in conjunction with *another* special Clive Barker *Hellraiser* project. We'll have details and a new release date for you as soon as possible.

The Canadian Super-Powers Registration Form



You may have come in contact with one or *you* yourself may be super human. Under the recent Canadian Super Powers Registration Act and in conjunction with **Alpha Flight,** you are now required to be registered with the government if you are a mutant, paranormal or specially enhanced super human. If you believe you have seen someone fitting this description, report what you know. You *must* register so if you are planning to visit, or are currently living in Canada. This act is being employed to help protect both paranormal and normal citizens of Canada and the U.S.. Anyone who is, has seen, or knows of a mutant, paranormal or specially enhanced human must fill out this form and send it to:

ALPHA WAVES, c/o Rob Tokar

Marvel Comics, 387 Park Avenue South, New York, NY 10016

All information will be kept confidential, and will be used to help us keep track of all known super humans in Canada. Our hope is to be able to study and understand their special abilities and to gauge them against other mutants/paranormals/specially enhanced persons who register. Once you respond you will be notified of your status and of follow-ups that may take place after registration.

Powers can be a curse or a blessing. Help us to help you make them a blessing. Register! Alpha Flight–Department H

Super Powers Registration Form/Loi D'accreditation des Superpuissances

If YOU are a Super Human/SI VOUS avez un personne super:

Name/Nom _____ Age/Age _____

Address/Addresse _____

_____

Mutant/Mutante (Born) ❑ Citizen/Citoyen: U.S. ❑

Paranormal/Paranormale (Accidental) ❑ Canada ❑

Enhanced/Ameliorer (Did it to yourself) ❑

Ability Type/Capacite (Explain) _____

_____

I am not a Paranormal, but I have had a sighting/Je n'ai pas un paranormale mais j'ais riser une:

Area/Etendue (State/City/Province) _____

Date/Datte _____ Gender/Genre: ❑ Male ❑ Female

Ability/Capacite(ies) _____

Hostile/Hostile ❑ Yes/Oui ❑ No/Non

Additional information about the Super Human (if available):

Name/Nom _____ Age/Age _____

Address/Addresse _____

_____

Postmark: 2099

LETTERS

Send your letters to: MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE, c/o Marvel Comics Group, 387 Park Avenue South, New York NY 10016.

Attention, correspondents: All letters to be considered for publications must include your complete name and address, though we will gladly withhold that info on request!

This month's letter column title comes to us courtesy of WAM Agent #5920 (a.k.a. David DeMara) of Homewood, AL. Thanks David! It's the perfect title to pursue while we're sitting around in our Levi's 501s and watching *Beverly Hills 90210*.

Of course, if anyone else has a title that fits our '90s lifestyle, send it on in! And don't forget: soon, we'll tally up your votes and decide whether to keep printing a nifty new title above this column each month or settle on one particularly nifty title and stick with it. Can the suspense get any greater than this?

Let's jump straight to our LETTER OF THE MONTH, that exceptional epistle that we think will be of particular interest to Marvelites far and wide! No need to thank us; it's the least we can do. Actually, this month's letter comes from someone who believes in doing *more* than "the least he can do."

Dear Marvelians,

You have repeatedly told your readers that one way to receive a genuine no-prize is to donate comics to a hospital or charity. Well, Mighty Marvelians, it is time to pull one of those no-prizes out of your dusty desk drawer and drop it in the mail because it is overdue.

I have earned this glorious gift, and it is time you paid up. Why? You think moi is selfish? Then obviously, you haven't read this entire letter.

There is a scoop and a clincher.Here is the scoop: In mid-September, I collected over 100 of my personal comics and donated them to the Dayton Children's Medical Center. I feel a no-prize was earned.

Here is the clincher: I DON'T WANT IT! I don't need it, either. I've got too much stuff sitting on my drawing table right now that I don't know what to do with. A no-prize would only add to the clutter.

Does this mean you don't have to send a no-prize? No, you still have to send one, but it is my sole request as a no-prize recipient that you mail it (or preferably, more than one because there are so many children) to the Children's Hospital Medical Center. Those children, doctors, and nurses are the ones who deserve a reward for their efforts. I'm just doing what is right.

(Name and address withheld)

We've got to say, "Name," that we're *very* impressed by both your generosity and your attitude about your actions. We are indeed sending out No-Prizes, not only to the hospital, but an extra one to you as well. Sorry about adding to the clutter, but what the heck—we figure you deserve it. Incidentally, hospital donations are *not* the only way you can do a public service to Marveldom, you know, but it's an awfully nice way!

Incidentally, while we're recognizing people's efforts, let's also give a nod (and a no-prize) to Brad Schubert, who donated 107 comic books to a hospital in Tuscon, AZ. And before we leave the topic completely, let's check in with one more person who's been busy spreading a little good...

Dear Marvel,

I'm not sure where I should send this letter, but I feel it has to be said. MARVEL AGE MAGAZINE sounds like the best choice.

I have a story to tell, one that involves your comics company and the X-Men in particular. I am a white, 18-year-old college sophomore, although I am often mistaken for a younger age. I was waiting for a bus on what seemed to be a fairly normal day. I was wearing (as usual) my

U.S. POSTAL SERVICE
STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT AND CIRCULATION
(REQUIRED BY 39 U.S.C. 3685)

Title of Publication: MARVEL AGE
1B. Pubication No.: 730-010
2. Date of Filing: October 1, 1991
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3A. No. of issues published annually: 12
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4. Complete mailing address of known office of publication: 387 Park Avenue South, New York, N Y 10016.
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6. Full names and complete mailing address of publisher, editor, and managing editor: Stan Lee, 387 Park Avenue South, New York, N Y Editor: Steve Saffel, 387 Park Avenue South: New York, N Y 10016. Managing Editor: N/A.

7. Owner (If owned by a corporation, its name and address must be stated and also immediately thereunder the names and addresses on stockholders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of stock. If not owned by a corporation, the names and addresses of the individual owners must be given. If owned by a partnership or other unincorporated firm, its name and address, as well as that of each individual must be given. If the publication is published by a nonprofit organization, its name and address must be stated.) 50% of Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. is owned by Mafco Holdings Inc., an affiliate of MacAndrews & Forbes Holding, Inc., 38 East 63rd Street, New York, N.Y 10021 The balance of Marvel Entertainment Group, Inc. is publicly owned and its shares of stock are traded on the New York Stock Exchange

8. Known bondholders, mortgagee, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages or other securities.

9. For completion by nonprofit organizations authorized to mail at special rates (DMM Section 424.12 only). The purpose, function, and nonprofit status of this organization and the exempt status for Federal income tax purposes: (Check one.) ☐ Has not changed during preceding 12 months. ☐ Has changed during preceding 12 months. (If changed, publisher must submit explanation of change with this statement.)

10. EXTENT AND NATURE OF CIRCULATION

A. Total No. Copies Printed (net press run): Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 35,660. Actual no. of single issue nearest to filing date: 156,900.

B. Paid and/or requested Circulation. 1) Sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors and counter sales: Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 34,318. Actual no. copies single issue nearest to filing date: 70,800. 2) Mail subscriptions: Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 808. Actual no. copies single issue nearest to filing date: 500.

C. Total Paid and/or requested Circulation (sum of 10B1 and 10B2): Average no. copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 34,927. Actual no. copies single issue nearest to filing date: 71,300.

D. Free Distribution by mail, carrier, or other means, samples, complimentary, and other free copies: Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 250. Actual no. copies of single issue nearest to filing date: 250.

E. Total Distribution (sum of C and D): Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 35,177 Actual no. copies of single issue nearest to filing date: 71,550

F. Copies Not Distributed 1) Office use, left-over, unaccounted, spoiled after printing: Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 683. Actual no. copies of Single issue nearest to filing date: 500. 2) Returns from News Agents: Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 0. Actual no. copies of single issue nearest to filing date: 84,850.

G. Total (sum of E, F1 and 2 should equal net press run shown in A). Average no. of copies each issue during preceding 12 months: 35,860. Actual no. copies of single issue nearest to filing date: 156,900.

11. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete.

(signed) Diane Rivera — Asst. VP Subscriptions

homemade X-Men button, a big red X inside a circle on a black background. I had a bag of new comics to read and very little troubling me at the moment.

As I waited for my bus, a young man, whom I judged to be about 16, caught my eye. He grinned and pointed at his breast pocket and then at me, and smiled. I looked at my breast pocket and saw my X-Men button. "Aha!" I thought. "Another fan of the merry mutants. He knows what it's like to be discriminated against because of something that makes you different."

Boy, was I wrong. He and I started a light conversation about comics in general and specific plot lines. When the conversation drifted toward X-Factor, he mentioned that a friend of his was so into the X-teams that he shaved the X-logo (the one I wear) into the back of his hair. "Wow," thought I, "now that's a true fan."

We talked some more and the conversation started dying down. Then he asked me something I will never forget:

"So have you ever hung out with or, like, joined the skinheads?"

"What?" No, I must have misunderstood. "What did you say?"

"Skinheads," he said in a hushed voice. "Like my friend who shaved the X into his hair."

"Certainly not!" I was appalled. Aghast. Shocked. Annoyed. How could this person possibly be an X-Men fan? Hasn't the series been all about accepting others, regardless of race, creed color, gender, genetic make-up, or (more recently) sexual preference? Isn't that what the X-books are all about? About the dream of peace and harmony? About living without bigotry or racism?

I cannot believe that after all these years and all the efforts on the part of Chris Claremont and Louise Simonson (to name a few) that people still aren't getting the message. I don't know. Maybe they're just reading the books for the mindless battle scenes or the nasty crime stories... or maybe they're only looking at the pictures. I certainly hope that this one ignorant person isn't representative of most comics readers, or people in general, for that matter.

So I tore into the kid, explaining graphically the outdatedness of his concepts and ignorance of his views. If he could accept mutant, why not Jewish or African-American people? As I got on my bus, I left him with general comments of disgust and about him corrupting Professor Xavier's dream. As the bus drove off, I glared at him through the window. He avoided my gaze.

I felt horrible. I was torn up by this rotten experience. But it didn't end there. As I was riding home, a small child in the seat in front of me asked his mother a question: "Mommy, why are people's skins different colors?"

The mother fumbled around the question. Normally, I would stay my quiet, unassuming self and stay out of the conversation, but the kid at the bus station had really gotten me angry.

"People are different colors," I said, and waited as the child turned to face me, "because no two people are the same. God wanted everyone to be different, to be their own person. Everyone should realize that we're all different from one another and that God loves us all equally. Color doesn't matter to God."

The mother looked disgruntled and offended at my interjection. She spoke as if the child wasn't there: "We're not teaching him to believe in God. We're atheists and don't believe that children should be exposed to nonsense like that!" She got up and moved with the child to another seat. The child grinned at me as he passed by.

I sighed resignedly and buried my nose in the latest INCREDIBLE HULK. At least some people still are sane, I thought. And lost myself in Peter David's latest tale.

James A.V. Camporeale
(Address withheld by request)

Don't let it get you down. You're absolutely right when you say that other people's differences is what the various X-books are all about. In the long run, it's your actions, along with those of the folks we mentioned above, that go a long way toward making the world a better place. We hope that seeing your letter (and our Letter of the Month) will help inspire other people to join in the effort and do what they can, whether it's giving comic books to sick children, fighting bigotry, or whatever. After all, this is one battle in which everyone can be a super hero.

Before we all run off to do our bit, though, let's take a second to check with one of our favorite masters of espionage in our monthly...

Yup, it's time once again to get out our wire tap and listen in on a message from another Wild Agent of Marvel! If you'd like to take part in a WAM JAM yourself, all you have to do is write to us on official WAM stationery or enclose you WAM I.D. number in your letter. Heck you don't even need a password.

Dear WAM Jam,

I have some questions for you:

1) How many WAM members are there?

2) How long does my membership last?

3) Will I have to order a new membership every year or do you tell us when we need to order a new one?

I would also like to have a WAM agent for a pen pal. I would like them to be around my age, 12½. I like all mutant comics, all of the Rise of the Midnight Sons titles, NOMAD, and THE INCREDIBLE HULK.

Well, until Wolverine roasts a marshmallow on each claw above Ghost Rider's head wearing a skirt and a party hat, Make Mine Marvel!

Agent 09198
Rt. 2, Box 512
Cedar Bluff, AL 35959

We wouldn't worry about people thinking you're a hick, Agent; we're all friends here. And because we're friends, we ran your questions by WAM honcho Paul Curtis. Here's what he had to say:

1) Believe it or not, there are currently about 10,000 WAM agents out there! And that's not counting all out undercover sleeper agents.

2) A membership lasts for twelve months of the amount of time it take to receive our WAM newsletters ("Whichever takes longer," said Paul.)

3) Don't worry, you will indeed be notified when your membership is about to expire. Hey, would we leave one of our prize agents out in the cold?

And speaking of cold, it looks like it's time to snuggle up and tuck ourselves in for another month. Button up your overcoats, folks, and we'll see you in thirty!

checklist

PREMIERES

BLACKAXE #1 1.75
UK action featuring a cover by John Romita Jr.

DARKMAN #1 (of 6) 3.95
All new, 48-page adventure of the tragic cult hero.

HELLSTORM: PRINCE OF LIES #1 2.95
The Son of Satan returns with a raised ink thermographed cover.

LANCE BARNES: POST NUKE DICK #1 (of 4) 2.50
Introducing Epic's only post-apocalyptic detective.

MIDNIGHT SONS UNLIMITED #1 3.95
A 64-page quarterly featuring tales of Ghost Rider, Blaze, Morbius, the Darkhold & Nightstalkers.

SPIDER-MAN CLASSIC #1 1.25
Re-presenting Spidey's adventures beginning with AMAZING FANTASY #15.

SUPER SOLDIERS #1 2.50
A silver embossed logo highlights this book of Frankenstein-like warriors.

WILD THING #1 2.50
An embossed cover spotlights Marvel's new virtual reality hero .

FEBRUARY SPOTLIGHT

DAREDEVIL: FALL OF THE KINGPIN 12.95
Re-presenting the "Last Rites" saga from DAREDEVIL #297-300.

FANTASTIC FOUR #375 2.95
48-page anniversary special featuring a holografx foil cover.

G.I. JOE #135 1.75
Polybagged with an exclusive photo trading card.

G.I. JOE/TRANSFORMERS BOOKSHELF 4.95
96-pages re-presenting the classic Limited Series.

GROO: EXPOSE 9.95
GROO #17-20 collected in a 96-page special .

GROO THE WANDERER #100 2.95
Anniversary conclusion of "The Wager of the Gods."

METEOR MAN MOVIE ADAPTATION 2.25
Official 64-page comic adaptation of the new film.

NAMOR #37 1.25
A holografx foil cover adorns this crucial development in the Atlantean Civil War.

SHE-HULK #50 2.95
This foil stamped, 48-page special bids farewell to John Byrne.

UNCANNY X-MEN MASTERWORKS 12.95
Softcover 128-page re-presentation of X-MEN #1-5.

MyS-TECH WAR CROSSOVERS

DARK ANGEL #10 1.75
MyS-TECH orders the assasination of DA.

DEATH'S HEAD II #5 1.75
DH travels to the UnEarth and battles his evil double.

MyS-TECH WAR #2 (of 4) 1.75

WARHEADS #11 1.75
The Warheads take on Death's Head.

First Week

AVENGERS WEST COAST #93 1.25
The return of Dr. Demonicus.

CAGE #13 1.25
Cage desperately searches for his kidnapped father.

CAPTAIN AMERICA #414 1.25
Cap visits the Savage Land to stop an evil AIM plot.

DAREDEVIL #315 1.25
DD faces the ferocious Mr. Fear.

DAREDEVIL: FALL OF THE KINGPIN TPB 12.95

DARKHAWK #26 1.25

DARKMAN #1 3.95

ILLUMINATOR #2 4.99

LIFE OF CHRIST #2: THE EASTER STORY 2.99

MARVEL COMICS #125 1.50
Four tales of Ghost Rider / She-Hulk/Iron Fist & Wolverine.

NAMOR #37 1.25

NIGHTSTALKERS #6 1.75

NOMAD #12 1.75
Nomad protects a protested AIDS clinic.

ORIGINAL GHOST RIDER #10 1.75
Guest-starring the Son of Satan.

PUNISHER ARMORY #6 2.00

PUNISHER GN: GHOSTS OF INNOCENTS #2 (of 2) 5.95

REN & STIMPY #5 1.75
An outer space epic of Commander Hoek & Cadet Stimpy.

SHE-HULK #50 2.95

SPIDER-MAN 2099 #6 1.25
Miguel plunges into the city's seamy "Downtown."

SPIDER-MAN CLASSICS #1 1.25

TERROR INC. #10 1.75

UNCANNY X-MEN #299 1.25
Did Magneto really die?

WEB OF SPIDER-MAN #99 1.25

WOLVERINE: INNER FURY 5.95

Second Week

ALPHA FLIGHT #119 1.75
"Clampdown" part 2 of 3.

AMAZING SPIDER-MAN #376 1.25

BARBIE #28 1.25

DARKHOLD #7 1.75

DEATH'S HEAD II #5 1.75

GHOST RIDER #36 1.75

GROO THE WANDERER #100 2.95

GROO: EXPOSE #5 TPB 9.95

GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY #35 1.25
The return of the Galactic Guardians.

KNIGHTS OF PENDRAGON II #10 1.75
Baron Blood returns to destroy Union Jack.

LANCE BARNES: POST NUKE DICK #1 2.50

MARVEL SUPER-HEROES SPECIAL #13 2.75
An all-Iron Man extravaganza.

PUNISHER WAR ZONE #14 1.75
Frank fights a town of killers.

QUASAR #45 1.25

RAVAGE 2099 #5 1.25
Trapped on Hellrock.

SAVAGE SWORD OF CONAN #208 2.25
Part 2 of "Conan and The Spider God."

SECRET DEFENDERS #2 1.75
This months lineup is Wolverine, Darkhawk, Nomad & Spider-Woman.

SILVER SABLE #11 1.25
Sable hunts down the secret Genesis Coalition.

SLEEPWALKER #23 1.25

UNCANNY X-MEN MASTERWORKS TPB 12.95

WILD THING #1 2.50

WOLVERINE #68 1.75

WONDER MAN #20 1.25
The Crazy 8 battle Splice, Rampage, Armed Response & Lotus.

X-MEN ADVENTURES #6 1.25
Wolverine faces Sabretooth in an arctic wasteland.

GUEST APPEARANCES

CODENAME: GENETIX #4 OF 4 1.75
Wolverine & Ka-Zar

DARKHAWK #26 1.25
New Warriors

DARKHOLD #7 1.75
Dr. Strange and the Scarlet Witch

DEATHLOK #22 1.75
Black Panther

GHOST RIDER #36 1.75
Daredevil

INCREDIBLE HULK #404 1.25
The Avengers

NEW WARRIORS #34 1.25
Spider-Man, the Avengers, the FF & Darkhawk

NIGHTSTALKERS #6 1.75
The Punisher

SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #199 1.25
X-Men

SPIDER-MAN #33 1.75
The Punisher

TERROR INC. #10 1.75
Wolverine

VENOM: LETHAL PROTECTOR #3 (OF 6) 1.75
Spider-Man

WOLVERINE #68 1.75
X-Men

EPIC COMICS

LANCE BARNES: 2.50
POST NUKE DICK #1
The detective at the end of the world!
WILLIAM SHATNER'S 1.75
TEKWORLD #8
Former Tek-addict Jake falls off the wagon!
GROO THE WANDERER #100 2.95
Special anniversary lunacy.
GROO EXPOSE TPB #5 9.95
More Groo than you can imagine!

(Next Month: Heavy Hitters!)

LIMITED SERIES

CODENAME: GENETIX #4 (of 4) 1.75
The final confrontation between Genetix and Prime Evil.
THE INCOMPLETE 2.50
DEATH'S HEAD #4 (of 12)
Introducing the deadly Undertaker.
MyS-TECH WARS #2 (of 4) 1.75
The good guys team up to take on MyS-Tech.
PUNISHER GN: GHOSTS OF INNOCENTS #2 (of 2) 5.95
The stunning conclusion.
SILVER SURFER/ADAM WARLOCK: RESURRECTION #2 (of 4) 2.50
The Surfer is reunited with Shalla Bal—or is he?
TOXIC CRUSADERS #2 (of 4) 1.25
Continuing the new, more outrageous, freakier insane action epic.
VENOM: 2.95
LETHAL PROTECTOR #3 (of 6)
Spider-Man tracks down the killersymbiote.

Third Week

AVENGERS #361 1.25
The Vision gets romantic with Crystal.
CONAN #267 1.25
DARK ANGEL #10 1.75
DOCTOR WHO #195 4.95
DOOM 2099 #4 1.25
The conclusion of the Tiger Wylde saga.
EXCALIBUR #64 1.75
Has Rachel Summers become Dark Phoenix?
G.I. JOE #135 1.75
G.I. JOE/TRANSFORMERS BOOKSHELF 4.95
INCREDIBLE HULK #404 1.25
The Hulk attacks the Avengers.
MARVEL AGE #123 1.00
Including features on the Spidey/Venom crossover and THUNDERSTRIKE.
MARVEL COMICS #126 1.50
More tales of Ghost Rider/She-Hulk/Iron Fist &Wolverine.
MIDNIGHT SONS UNLIMITED #1 3.95
MARVEL TALES #272 1.25
MORBIUS #6 1.75
Morbius hallucinates after taking a designer drug.
NICK FURY AGENT OF S.H.I.E.L.D. #46 1.75
PUNISHER #77 1.25
Micro is kidnapped by a street gang.
SILVER SURFER/ADAM WARLOCK: RESURRECTION #2 (of 4) 2.50
SPIDER-MAN #33 1.75
Spidey tracks his impersonator in part 2 of "Vengeance."
SUPER SOLDIERS #1 2.50
WARLOCK AND THE INFINITY WATCH #15 1.75
Warlock wants to resign as a cosmic champion.
WHAT IF #48 1.25
"What if Daredevil saved Nuke?"
X-FACTOR #89 1.25
A new genegineer wreaks Havok in Genosha.
X-MEN #19 1.25

Fourth Week

BARBIE FASHION #28 1.25
BLACKAXE #1 1.75
CONAN SAGA #73 2.25
"Conan and the Sorcerer," part 2.
CODENAME: GENETIX #4 (of 4) 1.75
DEATHLOK #22 1.75
Moses Magnum attempts to take over Wakanda
DOCTOR WHO CLASSIC COMICS #4 4.95
DR. STRANGE #52 1.75
Doc faces Nightmare.
FANTASTIC FOUR #375 2.95
THE INCOMPLETE DEATH'S HEAD #4 (of 12) 1.75
The debut of the deadly Undertaker.
HELLSTORM: PRINCE OF LIES #1 2.95
IRON MAN #291 1.25
MARVEL SPOTLIGHT Free
MARVEL UNIVERSE HANDBOOK #29 4.95
Including Carnage and Sabretooth.
METEOR MAN
MOVIE ADAPTATION 2.25
MOON KNIGHT #49 1.75
Gang war.
MOTORMOUTH & KILLPOWER #11 1.75
Zachary Sorrow, deranged vampire hunter.
MyS-TECH WAR #2 (of 4) 1.75
THE 'NAM #79 1.75
Part 1 of, "Beginning of the End."
NEW WARRIORS #34 1.25
PUNISHER 2099 #3 1.25
The horrifying difference between the future Punisher and his namesake.
PUNISHER WAR JOURNAL #53 1.75
SILVER SURFER #79 1.25
The Surfer discovers survivors of the Kree/Shi'ar war.
SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN #199 1.25
SPIRITS OF VENGEANCE #9 1.75
"Carnival of Death" part 2.
THOR #461 1.25
TOXIC CRUSADERS #2 (of 4) 1.25
VENOM: LETHAL PROTECTOR #3 (of 6) 2.95
The unveiling of a new Venom symbiote.
WARHEADS #11 1.75
WILLIAM SHATNER'S TEK WORLD #8 1.75
The pressure's building and former Tek-addict Jake falls off the wagon.
X-FORCE #21 1.25
X-MEN CLASSIC #82 1.25
Kitty stands alone against the Morlocks.

SPECIAL COVERS

SHE-HULK #50 2.95
Foil embossed anniversary issue
NAMOR #37 2.00
Holografx foil
G.I. JOE #135 1.75
Polybagged with photo trading card
FANTASTIC FOUR #375 2.95
Holografx foil
HELLSTORM: PRINCE OF LIES #1 2.95
Raised -Ink parchment

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
	HAPPY BIRTHDAY RON FRENZ FRANK PERCY SUZANNE GAFFNEY 1	**GROUND HOG'S DAY** 2	CHRIS EBEL 3			MARK BERNARDO 6
	TERRY STEWART 8	DAN BULANADI JO DUFFY 9			LOU BANK **LINCOLN'S BIRTHDAY** 12	RON LIM 13
MARY SPROWLS **VALENTINE'S DAY** 14	**PRESIDENT'S DAY** 15	RON WILSON 16	JANET WYNN 17	EMMA GARCIA 18	JOE CAPONSACCO 19	20
BARRY KAPLAN 21	**WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY** 22	23	MINDY MELLUL **ASH WEDNESDAY** 24	ARTHUR WEINER SYLVIA CRUZ 25	26	ANDY KUBERT LISA PATRICK RENEE KRUMPER 27
J.J. BIRCH NANCY MURPHY 28						

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